

**NOT FACING THE OTHER? A LEVINASIAN
PERSPECTIVE ON GLOBAL POVERTY AND
TRANSNATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY**

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it any university for a degree.

SUMMARY

In this study it is asked why we do not consider ourselves guiltier and more responsible with regard to the thousands of people who, through no fault of their own, die daily from preventable, poverty-related causes. Such neglect of the global poor is not surprising from certain perspectives. However, when the matter is approached from the perspective of Emmanuel Levinas's ethical philosophy, one is faced with the paradox that Levinas claims we are infinitely and inescapable responsible for the other, while the preventable dying of thousands of poor people indicates that we do not behave as though we are infinitely responsible for the other.

It would seem as though Levinas is crudely mistaken. However, Levinas distinguishes between an interpersonal ethical relation and an impersonal political relation with the other. The former is a relation of asymmetrical and infinite responsibility to which we are summoned by the uniqueness of the other's 'face.' The latter is a relation in which the 'third' is present, therefore requiring that the self limit his responsibility to a specific other and disperse it amongst numerous others. The presence of the third indicates the beginning of impersonal justice, institutions, politics, knowledge, as well as equality and reciprocity between the self and the other. However, every person that I encounter is a general other with whom I stand in a political relation, while at the same time, also a specific other who commands my infinite responsibility. With every other, I am simultaneously in a symmetrical political relation and an asymmetrical ethical relation. This is the ambiguity of political society: do I relate to the other politically or ethically? Both options enjoy legitimacy; however, from a Levinasian perspective, the choice to politically respond to the other less so.

To understand our indifference to the global poor, this study analyses the principal debate about transnational responsibility, the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, from a Levinasian perspective. Three ways in which the ethical relation with the extremely poor global other have been suppressed, thereby contributing to our ethical indifference to him, are identified. First, writers in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate seek to preserve the

subject in the greatest autonomy and freedom possible and thereby 'legitimise' a political response to the other. Second, when approaching the issue of global justice, cosmopolitan and communitarian theorists suppress the otherness of the other, which is what reminds us of our infinite responsibility for the other and the fact that justice is always incomplete. Third, insofar cosmopolitans prioritise and advocate a greater concern for the global poor, the strategy they favour (they emphasize human equality) is counterproductive for it overlooks and suppresses the uniqueness of both the subject and the other in the interpersonal ethical relation. The criticism of these three aspects of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate is then extended into claims that a more ethical relating to the globally poor than is presently the case is possible.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie vra waarom ons onself nie skuldiger en meer verantwoordelik beskou teenoor die duisende mense wat elke dag, sonder enige toedoen van hul eie, as gevolg van voorkombare, armoed-verwante oorsake, sterf nie. Vanuit sekere perspektiewe is sulke nalatigheid te wagte. Wanneer ons egter die kwessie vanuit die perspektief van Emmanuel Levinas se etiese filosofie benader, kom ons voor 'n teenstrydigheid te staan, aangesien Levinas aandring dat ons oneindiglik en onvermydelik verantwoordelik is vir die ander, terwyl die daaglikse voorkombare sterftes van duisende arm mense aandui dat ons nie optree asof ons onself as oneindiglik verantwoordelik teenoor die ander beskou nie.

Dit wil voorkom asof Levinas eenvoudig verkeerd is. Levinas tref egter 'n onderskeid tussen 'n interpersoonlike etiese verhouding en 'n onpersoonlike politiese verhouding met die ander. Eersgenoemde is 'n verhouding van asimmetriese en oneindige verantwoordelikheid waartoe ons beveel word deur die uniekheid van die ander se 'gesig.' Laasgenoemde is 'n verhouding waarby ook 'n 'derde' betrokke is, en daarom moet die self sy verantwoordelikheid teenoor die spesifieke ander beperk om so ook sy verantwoordelikheid teenoor 'n veelheid van andere na te kom. Die teenwoordigheid van die derde dui die beginpunt van onpersoonlike geregtigheid, institusies, politiek, kennis, asook gelykheid en wederkerigheid tussen die self en die ander, aan. Elke persoon wat ek teëkom is 'n algemene ander met wie ek in 'n politiese verhouding staan, asook, tegelykertyd, 'n spesifieke ander teenoor wie ek oneindiglik verantwoordelik is. Teenoor elke ander staan ek terselfdetyd in 'n simmetriese politiese verhouding en 'n asimmetriese etiese verhouding. Die dubbelsinnigheid van die samelewing lê daarin dat ek moet besluit of ek polities of eties teenoor die ander gaan optree. Beide opsies geniet 'n mate van legitimiteit, alhoewel, 'n politiese respons teenoor die ander minder legitiem is vanuit 'n Levinasiaanse oogpunt.

In 'n poging om ons apatie teenoor die wêreld se armes te verstaan, word die sentrale debat rondom die kwessie van transnasionale verantwoordelikheid, die kosmopolitiaanse-kommunitêre debat, vanuit 'n Levinasiaanse perspektief geanaliseer. Drie wyses waarop die

etiese verhouding met die ander onderdruk word, en sodoende bydra tot ons etiese apatie teenoor die ander, word geïdentifiseer. Eerstens poog skrywers in die kosmopolitiaanse-kommunitêre debat om die subjek so 'n groot mate van outonomie en vryheid as moontlik te handhaaf en te bewaar, en 'legitimiseer' in die proses 'n politiese respons teenoor die ander. Tweedens, wanneer die kwessie van globale geregtigheid deur skrywers in die kosmopolitiaanse-kommunitêre debat aangeraak word, word die andersheid van die ander, wat ons aan ons etiese verantwoordelikheid teenoor die ander, asook aan die onvoltooide aard van geregtigheid, herinner, onderdruk. Derdens, in soverre kosmopolitaanse skrywers hulself beywer om 'n groter mate van besorgdheid teenoor arm persone regoor die wêreld te ontlok, blyk die strategie wat deur hulle gevolg word (hulle beklemtoon menslike gelykheid) teenproduktief te wees, aangesien hierdie strategie die uniekheid van die subjek en die ander in die etiese verhouding misken en onderdruk. Die kritiek teenoor hierdie drie aspekte van die kosmopolitiaanse-kommunitêre debat word dan uitgebrei na aansprake dat 'n meer etiese houding teenoor die wêreld se armes moontlik is.

The dead have remembered – by Tadeusz Różewicz

The dead have remembered
our indifference
The dead have remembered
our silence
The dead have remembered
our words

The dead see our snouts
laughing from ear to ear
The dead see
our bodies rubbing against each other
The dead see our hands
poised for applause

The dead read our books
listen to our speeches
delivered so long ago

the dead hear
clucking tongues

The dead scrutinize our lectures
join in previously terminated
discussions

The dead see stadiums
ensembles and choirs declaiming rhythmically

All the living are guilty

little children
who offered bouquets of flowers
are guilty
lovers are guilty
guilty are

guilty are those who ran away
and those that stayed
those who were saying yes
those who said no
and those who said nothing

the dead are taking stock of the living
the dead will not rehabilitate us

translated by Adam Czerniawski

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ABBREVIATED WORKS

Works by Emmanuel Levinas

- BPW *Basic philosophical writings*. Edited by Peperzak, A.T., Critchley, S. and Bernasconi, R. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. (1996)
- CPP *Collected philosophical papers*. Translated by Lingis, A. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers. (1987)
- DF *Difficult freedom: Essays on Judaism*. Translated by Hand, S. London: Athlone Press (1990)
- EE *Existence and Existence*. Translated by Lingis, A. The Hague: Marthinus Nijhoff Publishers (1987)
- EI *Ethics and infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*. Translated by Cohen, R.A. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press. (1985)
- EN *Entre nous. On thinking-of-the-Other*. Translated by Smith, M.B. and Harshav, B. London: Athlone Press. (1998)
- IRK "Interview with Richard Kearney" in Kearney, R. (1984) *Dialogues with contemporary continental thinkers: The phenomenological heritage*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. (1984)
- IRM "Interview with Raoul Mortley" in Mortley, R (1991) *French philosophers in conversation*. London: Routledge. (1991)
- IWTA "The paradox of morality: An interview with Emmanuel Levinas" by Wright, T., Hughes, P. and Ainley, A. in Bernasconi, R. and Wood, D. (eds.) (1988) *The provocation of Levinas: Rethinking the Other*. London: Routledge. (1988)
- LR *The Levinas reader*. Edited by Hand, S. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. (1989)
- OB *Otherwise than being or beyond essence*. Translated by Lingis, A.. The Hague: Marthinus Nijhoff. (1981)
- OS *Outside the subject*. Translated by Smith, M.B. London: Athlone Press. (1985)
- RH "Reflections on the Philosophy of Hitlerism" in *Critical Inquiry* 17 (Autumn 1990)

- TI *Totality and infinity: An essay on exteriority*. Translated by Lingis, A. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press. (1969)
- TO *Time and the Other*. Translated by Cohen, R.A. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press (1987)

Works by Richard Rorty

- AC *Achieving our country: Leftist thought in twentieth-century America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (1998)
- CIS *Contingency, irony, solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (1989)
- EHO *Essays on Heidegger and others: Philosophical papers. Volume II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (1991)
- JLL "Justice as a larger loyalty" in Cheah, P. and Robbins, B. (eds.) (1998) *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and feeling beyond the nation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (1998)
- ORT *Objectivity, relativism, and truth: Philosophical papers. Volume I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (1991)
- PSH *Philosophy and social hope*. London: Penguin. (1999)
- RDP Richard Rorty, 'Remarks on Deconstruction and Pragmatism' in Mouffe, C. (ed.) (1996) *Deconstruction and pragmatism*. London: Routledge. (1996).
- RMC "Response to Molly Cochran" in Festenstein, M. and Thompson, S. (eds.) (2001) *Richard Rorty: Critical dialogues*. Oxford: Blackwell. (2001)
- RSC "Response to Simon Critchley" in Mouffe, C. (ed.) (1996) *Deconstruction and pragmatism*. London: Routledge. (1996)
- TP *Truth and progress: Philosophical papers. Volume III*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (1998)

Works by John Rawls

- CP *Collected Papers*. Edited by Freeman, S. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1999)

- JF “Justice as fairness: Political not metaphysical” in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. 14(3). 223-251. (Summer 1985)
- LP *The law of peoples*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press (1999).
- TJ *A theory of justice* (Second edition). Oxford: Oxford University Press (1999)

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1. Problem statement

Consider the fact that thousands die daily from preventable, poverty-related causes through no fault of their own. We cannot say that we did not know about their plight. We cannot say that we did all that could be done to prevent their deaths. We cannot say that we did not possess the means to save more lives than we did. Still, despite our failure to prevent these preventable deaths, we generally do not seem to consider ourselves unjust, bad, immoral, or even responsible. From some perspectives our indifference to the global poor would not be particularly striking, surprising or problematic. However, when we approach the matter from the perspective of Emmanuel Levinas's ethical philosophy, we are indeed faced with a paradox, because Levinas says I¹ am infinitely and inescapably responsible for the other.² It is the paradox between the infinite responsibility Levinas claims the self has and our indifference to the global poor that this study confronts.

However, an immediate objection appears: Is it not rather the case that our descriptive and prescriptive Levinasian premise is dead wrong and that the self has no such demanding responsibility for the other? Judging by the death toll exacted by global poverty,³ it

¹ The terms 'I,' 'subject,' 'individual,' 'existent,' 'ego' and 'self' are used interchangeably and are referred to in the masculine form. Further, when the word 'we' is used, it is generally meant to refer to an assembly of individuals with no collective moral identity of their own. When I deviate from this, e.g. with regard to some of communitarian writing in which the collective 'we' is given an identity of its own, the shift in meaning should be quite clear from the context.

² Responsibility is understood in a very wide sense. It covers a sweep from guilt, noticing the suffering of the other, questioning one's usurpation of the place of the other, on the one hand, to the extremity of 'hollowing' oneself out for the other, of always finding more to give the other, on the other hand. Though sometimes the most appropriate ethical response to the other might be to not do anything, such passivity may not be the result of indifference, but of concerned calculation. To be in an ethical relation with the other, that is, to be 'responsible,' is to not be indifferent to him.

I am only concerned with *individual* responsibility. I do not enter the debate over whether institutions are themselves moral actors (on this, see the contributions to Erskine, 2003), nor do I enquire after the most appropriate institutional arrangement to alleviate global poverty, or why and how present institutions have failed to more significantly reduce global poverty. I work from the assumption that institutions can be created and altered to better serve human priorities.

³ The term 'global poverty' has found a place in the title but little mention in the body of this study. Global poverty, especially insofar it is and has been severe and/or lethal, is taken as a clear indicator of how we, as individuals, have not realised our responsibility for the other and how we are still failing to do so. I resist

certainly does not seem as though individual persons behave as though they were 'infinitely responsible' for others. This objection makes it necessary to briefly recall Levinas's distinction between the 'ethical' and the 'political' relation with the other (while still granting the accuracy of the premise that we are infinitely responsible for the other in the ethical relationship).

When Levinas writes that the self is infinitely responsible for the other he is referring to the interpersonal ethical relation, a relation with a singular human being, recognised as unique, a 'face.' In the ethical relation, the self has been awakened to his having oppressed the other through his naively exercised freedom. It is an awakening that occurs through the other's ultimate resistance to being reduced to and contained in egoistic attempts at totalisation and objectification, which are actions exemplary of a subject living autonomously, a law unto himself. However, instead of annihilating the subject in guilt for his domination, the subject is reaffirmed as uniquely, infinitely and asymmetrically responsible for the other. In the interpersonal ethical relation the life of the other is ultimately more important than my own. Important to note is that in the ethical relation the self is affirmed as unique. It is the irreducible uniqueness of the other, expressed in his 'face,' that reminds me of my violation of the other and leads me to awaken to my infinite responsibility for him.

I am granted temporary respite from the stringency of the ethical relation by the presence of another person (the 'third') next to the other, who is also an other. In order to be just I have to limit my responsibility for a specific other so as to divide it amongst innumerable others who also command my responsibility. The presence of the third indicates the beginning of politics, justice, institutions, knowledge, decisions, and equality; equality of various others among whom I have to divide my responsibility, but it is an equality that also includes me. In this, the political order, it is necessary to decide the substance of our equality, that is, the

providing a definition of who exactly the global poor are, for a number of reasons: First, the concern of this study lies with the orientation of the *subject* toward the global poor, regardless of who specifically forms the latter group; second, in practice and in the wider literature there are already a number of ways in which the poor is defined, for example, as those living under the one or two 'dollar-a-day' mark; and finally, categorising 'the poor' too precisely seems to me to go against the attention Levinas tries to bring to the uniqueness of the other person, rather than the characteristics he shares with other people.

end of our responsibility for the other and the beginning of our freedom (from responsibility for the other). Consequently, there is a need for justice and theoretical knowledge, as well as for institutions to regulate our responsibilities to one other and to secure our freedom against intrusion by others. In the asymmetrical ethical relation, the other enjoys primacy over me, but in the political relation there is equality and reciprocity between us. This means that I can and may demand justice and due consideration from the other, can and may insist upon my rights against those of the other, and busy myself with myself.

There is no chronology between the ethical relation and the political relation. Having been born into a plurality, every person that I encounter is already a general other with whom I stand in a political relation, while at the same time, also a specific other who commands my responsibility (Critchley, 1992:231). With every other, I am simultaneously in a symmetrical political relation and an asymmetrical ethical relation. This is the ambiguity of political society: do I relate to the other politically or ethically? Do I claim reciprocity, my rights and equal treatment from and against the other, or do I acknowledge his human vulnerability and take up my infinite responsibility for his wellbeing, letting him go before me? Both options enjoy legitimacy, though, from a Levinasian perspective, the choice to politically respond to the other less so, for the extremity, infinity and urgency of the ethical demand leaves the subject unable to rest in good conscience in the presence of the other – there is so much to do and the subject is always too late in meeting his responsibility for the other. Though the subject can suppress and try to ignore the ethical debt of responsibility owed to the other, he ultimately cannot get away from it. The unmet responsibility for the other gnaws at the self. Importantly for social theory, the ethical parallels and underlies the political and is what drives moral progress in the political order. The extent to which we have met our responsibility for the other⁴ is the basis on which we discern a more just order from one less so. In an ethical politics, the impersonal political order, which tends to forget the particularity of the ethical and which cannot but fail in taking care of the other, is constantly pierced by reminders of the ethical relation. The tendency towards

⁴ For Levinas, human rights provide the measure of the extent to which we have met our responsibility for the other, and their imperfect realisation is a reminder of the inadequacy of our response (IWTA 178).

objectification and totalisation is constantly corrected by the ethical, only for the ethical disturbance to be absorbed again, but leaving the political order more objectively just. In an ethically aware political order there is a greater oscillation between the ethical and the political; there is a much greater hesitation before deciding upon either an ethical or a political response to the other; and there is a greater unease about opting for a political response, which occurs comparatively less often than in a less ethical state. For Levinas, liberal democracy is characterised by, and best suited for such a perennial ethical correcting of the 'violence' inherent to politics.

That we are at least disturbed by the preventable deaths of thousands of extremely poor people suggests that we are not wholly independent, isolated and self-regarding beings, and hints at an ethical relation with the other and the responsibility this implies. On the other hand, however, individuals generally do not consider themselves particularly responsible for the fate of the poor or particularly guilty for having done so little, if anything, to improve their lot. It is the discrepancy between the subject's general moral self-satisfaction and the tremendous guilt that one would have expected from a Levinasian stringency (guilt for having failed the other, judged in terms of the thousands of daily poverty related deaths) that this study wants to investigate. Why do we, as individuals, not regard ourselves guiltier and more responsible than we do with regard to those people dying from preventable, poverty-related causes, since guilt is what our Levinasian premise would predict with regard to such failure? Why has there been such a weak recognition and realisation of our ethical responsibility for the other?⁵

In asking these questions, we are surmising about the attitudes, understandings, postures and behaviour of real people in the social world, specifically as these pertain to responsibility for the other at the global level. However, in this study I will not, for example, carry out a quantitative survey of a representative sample of people to establish their attitudes more precisely. Rather, I shall infer from the principal debate about responsibility for others at the global level, namely the cosmopolitan-communitarian

⁵ I assume that, all things being equal, greater individual acknowledgement of guilt and responsibility would have led to greater inroads into the persistent problem of global poverty than has been the case to date.

debate. On the one side of this debate are cosmopolitan writers who think of justice as universal and impartial, human beings as ‘fundamentally equal’ and distributive justice as global in scope.⁶ Communitarians, on the other hand, see (distributive) justice as bound to a specific locale, attribute a strong unitary identity to respective political societies, and prioritise their fellow citizens over outsiders to a considerable degree, citizens whose individual identities are inextricably linked to their social setting.⁷ Although a survey sample might have been more representative of the common view, focussing on the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate has the advantage that its philosophical character causes writers in this debate to be more reflective over and conscious of their underlying assumptions, than respondents in a survey would have been. Still, in focussing on this debate, I do take it to resonate with the variety of attitudes of people in the social world, as well as properly articulating the assumptions that underlie these attitudes. For example, if I judge that the writers in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate seek to preserve the subject in the greatest autonomy possible, I believe I am justified in assuming that this has some rough correspondence to the way individuals in the social world choose to live their own lives. Further, if I judge understandings of justice in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate to have lost sight of ethical otherness, I believe I am justified in assuming that this has some rough correspondence to the way individuals in the social world think about justice. And, if I judge that those theorists in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate who desire a more just global order, pursue such an order through a strategy in which human equality is emphasized, I believe I am justified in thinking that this has some rough correspondence with how social activists tend to campaign for a more just world order.

So, in this study, I by and large confine myself to the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, the principal debate about our responsibility for others at the supranational level. In considering this theoretical debate I find *three* aspects of this debate that have forestalled (and continue to forestall) people from a greater realisation/awareness of their

⁶ Influential cosmopolitan writers include Brian Barry, Charles Beitz, David Held, Charles Jones, Andrew Linklater, David Luban, Onara O’Neill, Thomas Pogge, Henry Shue and Peter Singer.

⁷ Influential communitarian writers (in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate) include Alisdair MacIntyre, David Miller, John Rawls, Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer. Albeit that some of these writers do not explicitly address the issue of global justice, but confine their focus to a national setting, I think that much of their work is of considerable importance to the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate.

responsibility for others and/or legitimised indifference to the global other. Regarding the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, I shall argue that a disregard of our individual responsibility for the other is not surprising on the basis of (A) the assessment that writers in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate seek to preserve the subject in the greatest autonomy possible; (B) the unapologetic suppression of otherness when approaching the issue of global justice; (C) and insofar as some writers in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate (cosmopolitans especially) prioritise and advocate a greater concern for the global poor, I find the strategy they favour (they emphasize human equality) to be counterproductive for it overlooks the uniqueness of both the subject and the other in the interpersonal ethical relation. In criticising these three aspects of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, I employ Levinas's 'ethical philosophy' to develop my criticism, but also to show that, with regard to the three aspects criticised, a more ethical posture is conceivable.

In section 1.2 I reflect on this study and Levinas's inclusion in it, while in 1.3 I outline the argument(s) and structure of this thesis. In the final section (1.4), I address the issue of Levinas's deeply compromising statements (and silences) on some political issues, and consider if his philosophy is implicated by these pronouncements.

1.2. About this study

I approach the issue of our general indifference to the plight of the global poor through a reflection on the so-called cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, the umbrella under which writings with implications for the issue of transnational responsibility and global justice, particularly global *distributive* justice, fall. I shall not pay all that much attention to the oppositions and differences between cosmopolitans and communitarians.⁸ My concern lies rather with the underlying elements *shared* by these two approaches, underlying elements that are problematic insofar as these features constrain a greater ethical concern for the

⁸ On the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, see, for example Brown (1992); Cochran (1996; 1999); and Shapcott (2001).

other, particularly insofar as this other is the extremely poor non-fellow citizen. Since communitarians are by definition more concerned with their own citizens, I shall tend to focus on cosmopolitan writing, which at least professes a deep concern for the global other. I shall claim that the privileged view of the self by both sides of this debate is commensurate with a disregard of the other whose life is threatened by extreme poverty. I shall try to demonstrate that there is a tendency for otherness, and the ethical relation implied by otherness, to be suppressed in theorisation about (global) justice. My view is that the cosmopolitan tendency to emphasize human equality is useful to demonstrate the extent of global injustice, but as a strategy to convince us that the global poor should be treated with more or equal consideration it is deeply compromised for it suppresses that which elicits our ethical concern for the other, his uniqueness, in Levinas's terminology, his 'face.'

I shall use Levinas's ideas in a number of ways. The first is that his thinking guides us into *identifying* aspects of writing in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate that counter or suppress (an awareness of) our ethical relation with the other. Levinas's relatively underdeveloped ideas that political philosophy has failed to fundamentally question the value and principle of freedom and that the ethical tends to be suppressed in the political order led me to isolating the first two problems in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate (A and B above). The more fully developed idea that we are reminded of our (ethical) responsibility for the other by his 'face,' that is, his uniqueness, led me to identify and be suspicious of the cosmopolitan strategy of emphasizing human equality so as to elicit greater concern for the global poor (C). It is by having these Levinasian points in mind that I have been able to identify the three problematic aspects of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate in chapter 2, without there making much mention of the Levinas's thought itself. The second way in which I shall use Levinas's thought (and terminology) is to explain why these three aspects of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate indeed constitute a suppression of the ethical relation with the other. This takes place at the respective starts of chapters 3, 4 and 5. The first two ways in which I have employed Levinas's work have been primarily critical. The third way in which I use his ideas is more constructive, by stressing the ethical element of subjectivity, noting the possibility for

theoretical and institutional representations to be ruptured by ethical otherness, and sketching a strategy that reminds us of our ethical responsibility for the other. These 'constructive' developments are necessary to show that the limit of concern for the other has not been reached in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, and that increased concern for the global poor is possible. Fourth, and although I do not explore these issues, by framing the issue of not responding to the globally poor other in the Levinasian terms I have employed, certain questions are opened up for further study and which are discussed in the concluding chapter.

I have stated that my critique is informed, and indeed enabled, by an awareness of Levinas's unique philosophy. This is not to deny Levinas's proximity to a number of thinkers, both past and present. Indeed, as Derrida (1978) already pointed out decades ago, Levinas is much closer to the great figures of Western philosophy than he realises/admits.⁹ In spite of these (unacknowledged/unwitting) proximities, in Levinas's writing these disparate influences crystallise in a highly original philosophy. In this study, it has not been my intention to criticise Levinas's thinking or situate his thought relative to other writers in Continental philosophy. Rather, I intended to explore and exploit the richness of his ideas insofar as it suited my purposes.¹⁰ So, in a sense, this study is an exercise in 'applying Levinas' to a certain 'real world' problem, relying on the increasing esteem with which his thought is regarded and on an anticipation of the answers he might lead us to as justification for utilising his philosophy. One of the most striking and useful aspects of his philosophy is

⁹ I do not consider the enormous question of Levinas's relation with and distance from some of the great figures of Western philosophy, particularly Kant, Hegel, Bergson, Heidegger and Husserl, and to a lesser degree Merleau-Ponty, Blanchot, Buber, Rosenzweig, Derrida, as well as to Talmudic scholarship and 'Jewish ethics.' On the issue of Levinas's relationship to other thinkers, the starting point is Derrida's (1978) essay, "Violence and Metaphysics." Levinas relation with other thinkers is further explored in a number of books, including Bernasconi and Critchley (1991); Bernasconi and Wood (1988); Bloechl (2000); Caygill (2002); Critchley and Bernasconi (2002); Hand (1996); Peperzak (1993); and Wyschogrod (2000).

¹⁰ Levinas is absolutely central to this study. His centrality lies therein that it is his notion of 'infinite responsibility' that has enabled our problem formulation. One might argue that Derrida has also said that responsibility is infinite, but the quick answer to this would be that Derrida is simply employing an idea he got from Levinas. One other thinker that springs to mind as being quite similar to Levinas in many respects, although he would abhor the idea of this, is Richard Rorty. Rorty is very concerned with cruelty and the suffering of others, recognises the violence of institutions and representations of the other, is aware that cruelty often results the naïve exercise of human freedom, and also thinks that to emphasize human equality is not a good strategy to elicit concern for suffering poor people. However, the fact that Rorty introduces a very stark split between the public and the private, with neither realm enjoying an obvious priority over the other, puts him at odds with Levinas, who would never admit to the equal legitimacy of public and private concerns. On the affinities between Rorty and Levinas, see Jordaán (forthcoming).

the centrality and urgency he gives to the interpersonal ethical relation in which the self is infinitely, asymmetrically and inescapably responsible for the other. It is through arming ourselves with the tenet that there is an irreducible ethical relation between another and myself that we are able draw out the above-mentioned problems and tensions in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, problems and tension that result in a disregard for the plight of the global poor.¹¹

However, talk of the *interpersonal* relation brings us into an immediate confrontation with an ‘*institutional* cosmopolitan’ such as Pogge, who follows Rawls’s method but applies it as though all the world’s people were present in a global original position (Pogge, 1989). Pogge (1992:50) thinks that an institutional approach to international justice leads to a “more plausible overall morality,” and deems it unproblematic to “leave open” the issue of the interpersonal ethical relation. Further, Pogge continuously plays down the need for positive duties. I do not deny the importance of a cosmopolitan approach to global justice, nor do I dispute that a cosmopolitan institutional approach to global justice leads to a ‘more plausible *overall* morality,’ if this is understood as referring to the general arrangements and principles of global justice. What I do contend is that it is deeply problematic to simply ‘leave open’ the interpersonal ethical relation as though it were of no real consequence. From a Levinasian perspective, the self is always in both an ethical *and* a political relation with the other. The self is concerned with institutional justice because he is concerned with and for the other. The deeper the self’s concern for the other, the more he will be concerned with the justice of the institutional environment in which the other lives. It is the interpersonal, ethical responsibility for the other that informs moral progress in the political order of which institutions form part; that animates a desire for a better (institutional) justice for the sake of the other; that reminds institutions of their ‘violence;’ and that spurs us to respond to the other when institutions fail to do so. However, an even more

¹¹ Levinas thought has been receiving growing attention in recent years, although the secondary development of the political aspect of his work has not been extensive; English-language exceptions include Bergo (1999); Burggraeve (1981); Caygill (2002), Critchley (1992, 2004), Herzog (2002); and Simmons (1999). In the field of International Relations, a discipline that strikes me as always eager to pick up trends from other disciplines, Campbell (1996; 1998:171-184) has been the only writer to pay more than a few pages of sustained attention to Levinas. While I found Campbell’s work very useful for getting to grips with the political aspects of Levinas’s thought, I did not find any specific use for his treatment of Levinas in my study, and therefore do not make any further reference to him.

incriminating charge against institutional cosmopolitans is that the transfer of responsibility for the other to institutions constitutes an attempt to establish a zone of legitimate indifference to the need of the other, an evasion and suppression of the ethical accusation levelled against the subject, who is always in both an ethical and a political relation with the other. My criticism of institutional cosmopolitanism does not mean that I simply side with ‘interactional cosmopolitans,’ such as Shue, Luban and Singer, who emphasize our direct, personal responsibility for the other.¹² As with institutional cosmopolitans, interactional cosmopolitans also ultimately privilege the autonomous individual above the other, which grants the autonomous individual the possibility of considering himself perfectly justified in ignoring the need of the other. The interactional cosmopolitan preservation of the autonomous individual continues to clash with a Levinasian position, according to which the life of the other is ultimately more important than my own. One can never be fully justified in turning away from the other.

There occurs some mention of ‘institutions’ in this study. However, institutions are only considered in a very high degree of abstraction. When I do mention institutions, I am referring to those of the state, especially the most capacitated states, the wealthy democracies of the world. Reference to the institutions ‘of the state’ permits us to include (powerful) international institutions insofar as they are extensions ‘of the state.’ In any case, the behaviour of the most influential international institutions is never very far removed from the interests and authority of the world’s wealthy democracies.¹³ A major

¹² On the distinction between institutional and interactional cosmopolitans, see Pogge (1992), as well as section 2.2 below.

¹³ On the topic of (the potential for) global/cosmopolitan democracy, see, for example, Archibugi, Held and Köhler (1998); Held (1995); and Holden (2000). Regarding the purported growing inclusivity of the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO, three of the world’s most influential institutions, especially insofar as the matter of global poverty is concerned, the following can be noted. Germain’s (2002) assessment of the political agenda behind the growing inclusivity at the IMF is that it is based on the IMF’s need for less powerful states to accept the legitimacy of the reforms they would have to implement domestically in order to secure system-wide stability. Germain (2002:31-32) warns against seeing the “capitalist or American devil” behind the IMF’s recent effort to become more representative and inclusive, which, for Germain, represents “the most radical overhaul of the structure of global financial governance since 1945.” Still, this ‘overhaul’ corresponds to the typical behaviour of hegemonically pivotal international institutions, which is to absorb transnational conflict and to normalise and legitimise hegemonic values, which will come about if the dominant “are willing to make concessions that will secure the weak’s acquiescence in their leadership and if they can express this leadership in terms of universal or general interests, rather than just serving their own particular interests” (Cox, 1996:99). This seems to me to tally with Germain’s description of IMF reform. Similarly, the World Bank has implored states not to view its *Comprehensive Development Framework* (CDF), announced

change on the part of these international institutions toward a greater concern with the global poor would have to occur via/with the (tacit) consent of the world's most influential states. Hence, I generally focus on national institutions (which are also international actors in their own right) as the institutional thoroughfare for greater concern for the global poor.

One might object that Levinas's writing only pertains to the interpersonal and should therefore be kept out of the impersonal realm of the political.¹⁴ While Levinas does occasionally theorise the political, he never develops the rich ideas he raises to any great extent.¹⁵ Nowhere does he develop a 'political philosophy,' nor has anyone, to the best of my knowledge, attempted to construct such a political philosophy. This dissertation is also not an attempt at such a construction. Rather, I employ Levinas's thought primarily as an analytical tool to help shed light on some of the those aspects of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate that forestall a greater ethical disposition towards the other. In this regard, I find his thought sufficiently developed to guide us through the issues I want to explore. In fact, I did not even find it necessary to employ his more popular political pieces, as some of these are, shall we say, 'ethically' compromised, and I draw almost exclusively on his academic philosophical writing. (I shall discuss Levinas's compromised political comments in section 1.4 below).

in 1999, as a surreptitious attempt by the Bank to expand its influence in the domain of international development, but rather as something for governments to 'own' (Cammack, 2002:36). So, while the World Bank appears to have 'courted' wider acquiescence and participation, such a desire for congruency with the Bank's objectives have instead been imposed. According to Cammack's (2002:49) assessment, "The CDF has been presented by the World Bank as a means of incorporating structural and social issues into development, but on closer inspection it has turned out to be a means of tying them to a rigid IMF-prescribed macroeconomic framework and a disciplinary agenda devised and promoted by the Bank... With this goal in mind, the Bank is now actively engaged upon extending the scope of its CDF-PSRP [Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper] framework and drawing its 'development partners' into the process." The third influential organisation under consideration, the WTO, is notoriously undemocratic, because, even though all countries enjoy representation in the WTO, most of its decisions are dominated by the USA, the EU, Japan and Canada (Woods, 2000:218). As far as openness and responsiveness to civil society pressures are concerned, the WTO's engagement with civil society has been largely confrontational, as the 'Battle of Seattle' testifies, where civil society demonstrations scuppered the trade negotiations. However, there has been some interaction with civil society, in the form of NGOs, but in these interactions, the balance of power has remained unequivocally with the WTO, and by trying to build a relationship with some NGOs, NGOs representing more critical spheres of public opinion have been marginalised (Wilkinson, 2002:204).

¹⁴ Caygill (2002) and Critchley (2004) caution us against the risk in Levinas, specifically with regard to Israel, that a political response to the other be too quickly given.

¹⁵ See, for example, BPW 162-169; EN 18-38; EN 103-121; EN 189-196; LR 236-297; OB 157-162; TI 212-216.

1.3. Outline

The argument, with regard to the three problematic aspects of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate can be summarised as follows: (A) Writers on both sides of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate preserve a sphere of autonomy for the self, a sphere that indicates a 'legitimate' limit to one's responsibility for others and a beginning of the self's indifference to the other in good conscience. Communitarian writers demand a greater responsibility towards others (read: fellow citizens), though this is mostly because communitarians fear that too much asocial individualism will erode the social fabric that makes such individual autonomy possible in the first place. The autonomous self lives as though the world is there for his enjoyment, not questioning his naïve freedom, or his very right to be. By legitimising and entrenching the autonomous subject, writers in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate are making it less likely for the subject to be put in question for having usurped the place of the other. Following Levinas, we might consider the autonomously free subject to be oppressive of and/or indifferent to the other. However, it is in the other that the independent self runs into the limit of his spontaneous freedom; the other is a being that resists all efforts to subjugate his otherness, a resistance that is ethical, a resistance suggested by his 'face,' his vulnerable uniqueness. It is the face of the other that puts the hitherto imperial self in question, bringing home the injustice of his being. So much then for demonstrating why the preserved autonomy of the self in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate is problematic. From here one can move to stake out aspects of a more ethical subjectivity. Instead of annihilating the self in guilt for his offence, he is reaffirmed in his bottomless responsibility for the other, a constant 'hollowing out' of the self for the other. The extremity of responsibility for the other in the interpersonal ethical relation is moderated by the presence of a third next to the other, which announces the impersonal order in which the self regains a provisional autonomy in being equal to the other in the political relation. However, every other is both the ethical other to which one owes everything and the political other with whom the subject is in a relation of equality and reciprocity – the ambiguity of society. In the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, theorists view a political response to the other as a wholly legitimate option. However,

having been awakened to one's ethical responsibility for the other, the two responses are never of the same legitimacy. To be a more ethical subject in political society means to respond 'ethically' more often, to be more hesitant before the offence of responding politically, and to be more aware of one's responsibility for the other.

(B) In deciding the scope of justice, one is often able to detect a considerable amount of ethical concern for and generosity towards the other (especially amongst cosmopolitans). This is particularly noticeable in the proposed inclusion of those persons, such as the global extremely poor, who cannot reciprocate the benefits that they will enjoy from being included in the scope of justice. The generosity (supererogation/gratuitousness) of various (cosmopolitan) starting points suggests the recognition of our asymmetrical responsibility for the other, which implies a relationship with the other as 'face,' the 'face' of the other being what reminds us of our responsibility for him. Despite the ethical concern professed by these starting points of justice, the ethical relation (a recognition of the other as other) is soon suppressed in the theoretical and institutional generality and objectivity justice aspires to in the impersonal political order. It is the otherness of the other that reminds us, as individuals, of the interpersonal ethical relation in which each one of us stand with him. The interpersonal is what drives humanist progress in the political order. However, despite the deep ethical concern of many writers in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, they seem to have forgotten that all forms of theoretical and institutional justice constitute a violation of the other, and instead of reminding us of the ethical relation with the other, as signified by his face, we find a general reduction of what is other to the 'same' in their writings about justice. So, despite an *initial* ethical concern for the other at the 'outset' of justice, it appears as though the overriding function of justice turns into securing order, that is, ignoring and suppressing disruptive otherness. The suppression of what is other amounts to disregarding the ethical function of justice and letting the political function of justice predominate, maintaining the self and the other in an ethically indifferent 'political peace.' It is possible to separate the suppression of otherness in the tendency towards 'justice as order' into a philosophical and a socio-political aspect. Concerning the *philosophical* aspect of the tendency towards (justice as) order, 'justice as the suppression of otherness' is located as part of a broader tendency in Western philosophy to reduce what is other to the

same so as to contain it in a system of thought. In such a theoretical totality, units of the system receive their meaning from their position in the system. However, the other is what ultimately disrupts and resists the closure of a system of thought (e.g. on justice) and what cannot be contained in a concept. Still, despite the violation of the other in representing him, there remains a need for knowledge, objectification and theorisation to solve moral and practical dilemmas of justice in the presence of the third. That said, it also remains important that the betrayal of the other in the said be forever disrupted by otherness and reminded of the 'pre-original' interpersonal ethical relation with the other, something that can be effected through a constant emphasis on human complexity. Regarding the *socio-political* dimension of 'justice as order': although suppressed, the ethical relation with the other is already implied by the need for and the imperfection of social order, for its imperfection shows that human beings cannot be contained in a system. Humans, by definition, resist containment in a totality. Although one should be critical of the institutional violation of the other, there is a need for justice and order in the presence of the third. Having said that, the political order, which tends to forget the ethical relation with the other, should forever be (made) mindful of the violence institutions commit against the other. Furthermore, and in the name of our 'pre-original' responsibility for the other, political institutions should be reminded of their unfinished responsibility for the other, in a perpetual aspiration to a better justice. For Levinas, the liberal state, which is by definition self-questioning, is the political form most eager and likely to alter its institutional complex so as to reduce its violation of the other in the order of justice.

(C) Cosmopolitans want to demonstrate that all humans are substantially equal to one another and/or should be treated as such, the case for which they argue along two routes. First, the interdependence of the global political economy means that we are all participants in a cooperative undertaking of which the benefits and burdens are to be distributed fairly. Second, cosmopolitans also appeal to an impartial assessment to show the current global distributive order to be unjust by even the most inegalitarian (national) standards. To (theoretically) yield a just distributive order, the perspectives of the global poor would have to be granted an equal weight in the consideration of what such an order would look like. What these two strategies share is the view that, if persons are to be regarded as more

substantially equal, that is, their perspectives are given greater currency, then the current global distributive order could be shown to be unjust. This type of argument is of great use to indicate the injustice and inequality of the current global order. However, insofar as this argument is also used as a strategy to convince us that others ought to be treated more equally and be brought into a greater equality it runs into problems, especially in the anarchical international system in which there is no authority to enforce a better treatment of others, as exists within states. The unenforced better treatment of others (particularly by those in a better position to help) requires the ethical recognition of the other as a face, which is the opposite of emphasizing his equality with all others. The ethical relation between the subject and the other, which parallels the political relation, is what drives humanist progress in the political, drives justice to be more just. We are awakened to our responsibility for the other by his 'face,' that is, how the other is different from all others, how I have nothing in common with him (BPW 16). Furthermore, in the ethical relation, the subject is individuated in the uniqueness of his election as responsible.¹⁶ According to this line of thought, an emphasis on human equality deadens our awareness of the ethical command that issues from the face of the other. How are we then to represent the other so as to elicit concern for him if emphasizing equality is not a good strategy? I propose that we pursue a strategy of emphasizing human complexity, which carries the dual benefit of articulating and drawing attention to the numerous ways in which we have oppressed and neglected the other, and of being more suggestive of the other as face.

In chapter 2, I try to demonstrate the suppression of the ethical relation with the other in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, with regard to the three problematic aspects that were mentioned above. In chapters 3-5, I elaborate on what indeed makes these three aspects problematic from a Levinasian perspective, while drawing out the ethical dimension of our relation with the other.

¹⁶ The focus is only on how the uniqueness of the other is suppressed, not the uniqueness of the subject, because the other is individualised in recognising and responding to the other as face.

1.4. A comment on Levinas's compromising political pronouncements

Doubts might remain about Levinas's relevance to politics, in the light of some deeply compromising pronouncements he made on politics, pronouncements that are particularly damaging in the light of the ethical force his thought projects.¹⁷ One might surmise that it is exactly because of the ethical stricture of Levinas's thought that these statements are so compromising. The most significant examples of Levinas's missteps include the occasional disdain for Islam, a racist reference to Communist China as a "yellow peril," and Levinas's ambivalence about the massacre at Sabra and Chatilla in 1982,¹⁸ the latter fitting into a wider ambivalence about the legitimacy of Israeli state (see Caygill, 2002:159-198).

In Levinas's philosophical thought proper, the movement from ethics to politics is always marked by an unease about the violence inherent to institutions and political necessity, a violence that is always to be corrected, to be 'unsaid.' One is able to detect this hesitancy with regard to Levinas's thinking about Israel, as Levinas's ambivalence at times lapses into permitting state violence on behalf of the Israeli 'other.' For Levinas, Israel has two principal meanings, two histories: 'universal' and 'holy.' The universal history refers to the development of Israel as a modern state, similar to other states. The holy history of Israel refers to the religious character and promise of the Jewish state (Caygill, 2002:160). Israel finally proffers Jews the opportunity to "carry out the social law of Judaism." For Levinas, the 'holy' history of Israel lies therein that "[t]he subordination of the State to its social promises articulates the significance of the resurrection of Israel as, in ancient times, the execution of justice justified one's presence on the land" (DF 218). The difficulty for Levinas lies in reconciling these two histories, for he recognises the geopolitical quagmire in which the state of Israel finds itself, and that its very survival is dependent on a certain 'political' response to its neighbours, that is, a side-lining of the ethical promise of Israel for reasons of state.

¹⁷ Apart from the issue of Israel, Critchley (2004) identifies four further problems Levinas's politics, which Critchley summarises as "fraternity, monotheism, androcentrism [and] the family" (p. 172).

¹⁸ Shortly after the massacring of Palestinian refugees by Christian soldiers with the complicity of the Israel Defence Forces at the Chatilla and Sabra camps in Lebanon in 1982, Levinas participated in an interview on an Israeli radio station. During this interview he failed to condemn Israeli complicity and further went against the grain of his philosophy in saying that "in alterity we can find an enemy" (LR 294). For the interview, see *The Levinas Reader* (pp. 289-297).

In the political, it is necessary to decide, to act, and to choose sides. Undoubtedly, Levinas has let himself down in forgetting the ethical relation in with the other, a relation that is to shadow political interaction with the other, when he failed to condemn the massacre at Sabra and Chatilla. Though Israel and the fate of the Jewish people is a significant issue for Levinas, his unfortunate comments and silences on the matter of Israel is but one possible response to a concrete, historically specific situation. Ethics does not determine what a politics should look like, because that would limit the freedom of the response to the other (Critchley, 2004:178-179). Levinas's response needed not have been what it was. In fact, it is in light of the generosity of his philosophy that his comments seem so out of place and uncharacteristic. But, is there not after all a link between Levinas's philosophy proper and his ill-advised political comments?

In *Levinas and the Political* (2002), Caygill portrays Levinas as a thinker concerned with 20th century horror "with an intensity and bleakness unrivalled in philosophical writing" (p.1). Caygill shows us a Levinas for whom "war" was never far away, a precarity of the ethical in the face of the political. After all, Levinas, most of whose family was murdered by the Nazis, has described his life as "dominated by the presentiment and the memory of the Nazi horror" (DF 291). While Levinas's perception of the flimsiness of the ethical might explain his willingness to resort to a political response in the concrete political problem of Israeli geopolitics, I don't think there is anything in Levinas thought that necessarily leads to a (harsh) political response to the Arab Muslim, to a preclusion of an ethical response to him or her. It is instructive to see how Caygill suggests such a link. He focuses on the notion of 'proximity,' a central concept in Levinas's thinking that indicates being in an ethical relation with the other, that is, a relation that is *not* understood by Levinas in terms of geographical proximity or as based on the social identity of the other (for Levinas, the other is naked, human). In the presence of the third, there is a need for ontology, justice, theory, principles and decisions; there is a search for answers, which are always bound to a certain social context. However, the ethical relation is not lost in the impersonal political order, for "justice remains justice only, in a society where there is no distinction between those close and those far off, but in which there also remains the

impossibility of passing by the closest” (OB 159, which Caygill also cites, p. 142). In my view, this passage is simply a warning against losing sight of specific needs of the other in the abstractions of justice, and does not prejudge the identity of the other in asking ‘who is closest?’ However, for Caygill (2002:142-143), on the basis of the foregoing quotation,

[t]he problem with Levinas’s resort to the correction of ontology by means of proximity is that it potentially leaves intact the worst forms of state in the name of the other. It seems as permissible on Levinas’s account to wage war by forgetting the self in the proximity of the other, as it is to pursue the work of justice. Thus as long as responsibility for the other is given precedence over responsibility for the third, it is hard to see that there is the importance that Levinas claims in the distinction.

Caygill is forgetting the nudity of the other. In Levinas’s view, the other does not have a social identity, or rather, the other is other because he is irreducible to his social identity. It seems as though Caygill’s reading is prejudiced by the notorious 1982 interview mentioned above, in which Levinas contradicted his entire oeuvre by identifying the other as “the neighbour, who is not necessarily kin, but who can be” (LR 294), that is, identifying the other as the Israeli ‘other.’ While, in his later work, Levinas often described the other as the ‘neighbour,’ he never, to my knowledge, identified the other as “kin,” for this clashes with his view of the other as ‘face’ and the self as being responsibility for whoever shows up. To sum up, for Levinas, in the ethical relation, proximity is not spatial and the other is noticed in his uniqueness, how he has nothing in common with other people. In the freedom of the political decision, one has the choice of siding with the Israelis, or whoever. But, following Levinas’s own philosophical work, one should not lose sight of the ethical, despite the imperatives of politics, however (badly) one may interpret these imperatives, as Levinas seems on occasion to have done.

CHAPTER 2 – SHARED DIFFICULTIES IN THE COSMOPOLITAN-COMMUNITARIAN DEBATE

2.1. Introduction

The issue that concerns us is that people generally do not consider themselves guilty and responsible, despite living in a world in which thousands die daily from preventable, poverty-related causes. The apparent lack of guilt is even more puzzling when considering the Levinasian contention that, in the interpersonal ethical relation, the self is infinitely and inescapably responsible for the other. To be sure, the extremity of the interpersonal ethical command is tempered in the presence of the third person, when it becomes necessary for my infinite responsibility to be limited, divided and dispersed among a multitude of others. However, that every person is both the general other with whom I stand in a reciprocal, political relationship *and* a specific other with whom I stand in an asymmetrical ethical relationship means that my responsibility is never finished. I am forever under an ethical accusation; my very right to be is always in question for my neglect of and violence against the other.

In the presence of the third next to the other arises the need for the impersonality and objectivity of justice, politics, knowledge and a ‘theoretical attitude.’ It is against the backdrop of stark global material inequality and widespread life-threatening poverty that the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate¹ delineates theoretical attempts at establishing how we are to limit, disperse and realise our responsibility to numerous others in the global political relation. The need for the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate lies therein that it is not obvious how we are to best disperse our responsibility in the presence of the third party and as such we find a good number of (partial) suggestions about how the world *ought* to be arranged.

¹ There is also a liberal-communitarian debate in political theory. In the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate the moral standing of states is questioned, whereas it is not done in the liberal-communitarian debate (Cochran, 1996:30). Note that Rawls and Rorty are considered liberals in the domestic debate, but communitarians in the international level debate. For an overview of the liberal-communitarian debate, see Mulhall and Swift (1992). For examples of works addressing the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, see Brown (1992), Cochran (1996, 1999), Cohen (1996), Hutchings (1999), Morrice (2000), Nardin and Mapel (1992), and Shapcott (2001).

Although the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate is in part an attempt to arrive at answers about how best to meet our responsibility for the other, it seems as though the 'pre-original' ethical responsibility for the other and the guilt this implies for the subject, have largely been overlooked and/or suppressed. Below, I indicate three ways in which the ethical relation has been deadened in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. The three ways in which I find global moral concern and progress to have been stifled in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate are through the unquestioned centrality accorded the autonomous subject (section 2.2.); in the tendency to suppress otherness in the search for general organising principles of global justice (section 2.3.); and through the strategy of emphasizing human equality in order to bring about a more just order (section 2.4.). Regarding the first way in which the ethical relation is suppressed in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, I will attempt to show that, in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, the value of freedom and the autonomy of the free subject are never questioned fundamentally. The sovereign individual is taken as the most important element of moral concern. By prioritising the autonomy of the subject, the subject is legitimised in responding to the other 'politically' (insistent on its own interests) and the likelihood of the subject questioning his own being is reduced, leaving the self bound to consider himself blameless and not responsible for the suffering of the other. Against such a tradition, for Levinas there is something more important than my own life, and that is the life of the other. Regarding the second manner in which the ethical relation with the other is undermined, in the political order there is a need for a 'theoretical attitude' to guide us in the division of our responsibility for the other according to principles, a theory or a framework of justice. However, in the aspiration to fulfil this need for a system of justice, there is a tendency for ethical otherness to become lost in generalisation, which means we are not confronted by what reminds us of our infinite responsibility for the other, his face. Regarding the third way, insofar as cosmopolitans pursue a strategy of emphasizing human equality in order to exact greater global (distributive) justice, this strategy overlooks the asymmetrical ethical relation between subject and other, in which the other is not equal (similar) to others, but unique, and the subject is not equal but uniquely and individuatingly responsible.

Before proceeding to a discussion of the three problematic aspects of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate in the rest of this chapter, it will be useful to briefly distinguish

between the cosmopolitan and communitarian positions. Though the cosmopolitan-communitarian distinction is somewhat simplistic and definitely not watertight,² features that distinguish the two sides can be discerned. The cosmopolitan approach stems from the Stoic self-identification with humanity as such (Nussbaum, 1997); Kant's liberal moral universalism, regard for human beings as ends in themselves, visions of a "pacific federation" forming the supra-national background maintaining the freedom of individual states³ (Kant, 1970:104) and concern with injustice everywhere;⁴ and the utilitarian view of all persons and their needs as being worthy of equal consideration and attempts to arrive at what is common to all humans, that is, roughly, how the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people is to be achieved. The roots of all present-day cosmopolitan approaches still reflect these origins. Despite some variation within the cosmopolitan position, the various strands can be said to share the following elements:⁵ First, for cosmopolitans, universal principles of justice exist; the need for "a single universal criterion of justice" being driven by increasing global interdependence (Pogge, 1999:339; also O'Neill, 2000:117), as well as the need for a moral yardstick against which existing institutions, practices and policies are to be judged (Beitz, 1994:124 and 1999b:519). Second, principles of justice should be arrived at impartially, that is, answers to the question as to what is just should not reflect the inequality of power and privilege among those deciding what is just. Third, all forms of cosmopolitanism view humans as being equal "in some fundamental sense" (Barry, 1998a:146; also O'Neill, 2000:190), in other words, rules and principles of justice should apply to everyone equally. Fourth, cosmopolitan morality insists that distributive justice is an international issue (Beitz, 1994:125; 1999b:520; Barry, 1998:145; Pogge, 1994:196), which does not mean that the state is not significant in the realisation of the

² To the best of my knowledge, Brown (1992) was the first to delineate the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. In a more recent book (2002), he retracts some of the emphasis on this debate, seeing it as too simplified a view.

³ This is not to say that all cosmopolitans endorse the Kantian vision of a "pacific federation" of states (see Franceschet, 2001). Rawls's (LP) society of states approach comes closer to Kant's internationalism than the proposals of many cosmopolitans.

⁴ Already during the late 18th century was Kant (1970:107) able to claim the development of a universal community to the point "where a violation of rights in one part of the world is felt everywhere."

⁵ A number of quite distinctive approaches within the cosmopolitan frame can be identified, such as the dialogic cosmopolitanism of Held (1995) and Linklater (1982; 1998a; 1998b); the contractarian cosmopolitanism of Barry (1973; 1989a; 1995; 1998a; 1999), Beitz (1979a; 1979b; 1988; 1994; 1999a; 1999b), Pogge (1989; 1992; 1994; 1999; 2001; 2002), and Wenar (2002); the rights based cosmopolitanism of Vincent (1986), Luban (1985a; 1985b; 2002), Shue (1980), and Jones (2001); O'Neill's Kantian constructivism (1986; 1996; 2000); and utilitarian cosmopolitanism (Singer, 1985).

international distributive justice,⁶ but that the role of the state is to be judged from a universal and impartial perspective. On the whole though, cosmopolitans argue for a shift away from the state as the principal locale for distributive justice. (Beitz, 1999a:292; Pogge, 1992:58; O'Neill, 2000:171-2, 179).

Communitarians posit a greater unity between the members of a political community than one finds in cosmopolitanism, and also views the link between the identity of the individual and her political community as more intimate and intractable. So strong did one of the antecedents of communitarianism, Aristotle (1980:179, emphasis added), assume this link to be, that he asked “whether we ought to regard the virtue of a good man and that of a sound citizen *as the same* virtue, or not?” Apart from Aristotle, present-day communitarian thought also traces its roots to other classic writers such as Rousseau, Herder and Hegel. Rousseau (1968:153) linked individual and collective self-determination, whereby individuals realise their citizenship and freedom through the general will. Herder linked communal and individual identity, common language and the state (Barnard, 1965), while in Hegel the tension between the individual and other members of the civil society with who s/he is in competition is reconciled in the state (Frost, 1996:148). Against the Enlightenment view of freedom, Hegel held that the state provides the context in which individual autonomy is fully attainable without needing to turn one’s back on one’s affective community (Brown, 1992:65). Turning to some of the features of present-day communitarian writing (that has to confront the problem of international distributive justice), some commonalities can be discerned.⁷ First, for communitarians, principles of (distributive) justice arise in a specific locale. Though it might be possible to recognise universally similar principles of justice, these only find content in specific contexts. Second, not all humans are attributed equal moral weight and consideration, except in a very bare sense of the term. The reasons for this lie in citizenship and the importance of special relationships, whether affective or civic. Third, communitarians attribute a much greater unitary identity to a political society than do cosmopolitans. Communitarians exhibit a much stronger conception of the communal

⁶ Pogge distinguishes between “legal cosmopolitanism” and “moral cosmopolitanism.” The former aspires to a world state, whereas the latter stresses that all people are morally related (Pogge, 1992:49).

⁷ It is possible to identify a number of communitarian approaches, such as the ‘first wave’ of respondents to Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice*, which include MacIntyre (1981), Sandel (1984a; 1984b; 1998), Taylor (1979; 1995), and Walzer (1983; 1990; 1994); political realism; the liberal nationalism of Miller (1988; 1993; 1994; 1998) and Tamir (1993); Rawls’s ‘Society of States’ approach (CP; JF; LP; TJ); Gilligan’s (1982) ethics of care, (also Mendus, 1993); Frost’s (1996) communitarian constructivism; and Rorty’s liberal ironism.

good, and give the communal good greater priority over private conceptions of the good, in comparison to cosmopolitans. Even in liberal societies, where presumably the right enjoys priority over the good (see TJ 27-28), the freedoms enjoyed in these societies require sacrifices, obligations and commitments from citizens in order to sustain such a political order (Taylor, 1979). Fourth, for communitarians, an individual's identity is inextricably linked to the society/ies in which he lives or chooses to identify with. Any attempt at self-reflection or individuation inevitably incorporates some of the elements of one's social situation.

2.2. Preserving the autonomous subject and the limiting of responsibility

Even though freedom is the least questioned value in political philosophy, it is widely recognised as problematic, seen as being in tension with the value of equality (the egalitarian critique) and/or as undermining the social bonds that enable a lesser but more stable freedom (the communitarian critique). Freedom as a value is never questioned as such, but rather to the extent that it clashes with other social values such as equality and community. What is more, it seems as if in our era of economic liberalism and a wider recognition of individual human rights than ever before, individual freedom has become institutionally and ideationally strengthened at the expense of the competing values of community and equality. The horrors of the twentieth century remind us of the pride of place of freedom ought to enjoy, as the regimes that most deeply subordinated autonomous freedom, whether in the name of community (e.g. Nazi Germany, apartheid South Africa) or equality (e.g. Khmer Rouge Cambodia, Stalinist Russia) are as close as we can get to universally accepted examples of socio-political evil.

When the value of freedom is questioned in writings of political philosophy, this is hardly ever done fundamentally. Authors who stray too far towards a celebration of other values at the expense of freedom are quickly rebuked.⁸ That being said, no political philosopher seriously holds a position advocating unrestrained freedom. Even a libertarian such as Nozick (1974) admits the legitimacy of a certain curtailment of

⁸ See, for example, the criticism of Sandel's recent book, *Democracy's Discontent*, by Dagger (1999).

liberty. Unchecked and egoistic freedom would make society impossible and would spell disaster for those in weaker positions. What is usually in question is rather the *extent* to which freedom ought to be restricted vis-à-vis the values of equality and community. The tension between freedom and the values of equality and community is reduced by pointing to the role of these two values in actually enabling the exercise of freedom, facilitating a greater freedom still compatible with the freedoms of others. Despite moments of generosity and concern with the liberties of others, the curtailments of freedom vis-à-vis the social values of equality and community ultimately serve to shore up self-interested *individual* liberty. Communitarians often remind us that too much atomistic freedom will undermine the very polity necessary to sustain the subject's freedom (Taylor, 1979). Egalitarians point out that inequality undermines both the stability on which the freedom of the privileged classes are based and the effective realisation of various freedoms by the poorer classes. At its core, political philosophy is concerned with searching for an appropriate balance between the republican ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, though freedom remains the pivotal point of normative reference among this trinity of republican values.

Forgetting for a moment the economic connotations of equality,⁹ equality refers to there being similar constraints placed on people's freedom, but also that people be similarly enabled to effectively realise their liberty. In this sense then, so-called 'struggles for freedom' are also 'struggles for equality.' To politically struggle for freedom is to strive for an equal political limitation of everyone's freedom, as well as the equal endowment of people (by institutions) so as to enable them to effectively and meaningfully exercise their liberties. As mentioned, recognising that individual freedom has to be curbed in equal measure in order to make social life possible and to allow others the space to exercise their freedoms (our so-called 'negative' duties to others) is a widely accepted notion. What is more controversial, is that a self has a 'positive duty' to assist and enable another person to exercise a more meaningful and effective freedom (This corresponds to an attempt to shift the meaning of 'equality' from referring to the similar limitation of everyone's freedom to indicate the *promotion* of a more meaningful freedom for the other). The relatively more controversial character of positive duties suggests that the autonomy of the self is assumed to be foremost, compared to the needs

⁹ The strong economic connotations of the notion of equality lie therein that in society the curtailment and the enabling of freedom are to a large extent monetised, that is, taxes curtail and redistribution enable.

of others. In the terms of our discussion, positive duties constitute the most extreme form of general responsibility for others demanded in traditional political philosophy.¹⁰

Despite the spirit of generosity and genuine moral concern that motivate arguments in favour of a greater universal equality and a promotion of the freedoms of the weak vis-à-vis the freedom, interests and rights of the powerful, arguments that often insist upon a greater taking up of duties towards the poor, there remains a moment in which these progressive arguments compromise themselves by limiting their concern and responsibility for others, and doing so in good conscience. Such a compromise runs counter to the ethical expiation for the other in responsibility that global humanist progress requires. While in traditional political philosophy disagreement exists over the extent to which freedom should be limited, over the substance of equality, and the extent of one's responsibility for others, what is not in dispute in these traditional understandings is that there ought to be a limit to the demands others may make upon a subject and to the duties the subject owes others. The restriction of demands by others suggests a space where the subject is free, beyond the political reproach and demands of the other, justified in enjoying an autonomous liberty equal to that of the other. Freedom as autonomy is to not have to answer to anyone, to not consider oneself responsible, as long as one remains within certain bounds, such as those articulated by principles of equality, law, decency, morality, etc. Behind the apparent agreement that there ought to be a limit to what others may demand of the subject lies the assumed centrality of the subject, a subject that is either equal to others, or superior in the sense that the equality of the other to the subject has to be demonstrated/granted. The self is assumed not

¹⁰ Duties are corollary to rights. If someone has a certain right it means that some agent has a duty to ensure the satisfaction of that right; a right is a "demand upon others." (Shue, 1980:16). Shue argues for the acceptance of "basic rights" (consisting of 'security rights' and 'subsistence rights' – pp. 20-29), which are "everyone's minimal reasonable demands upon the rest of humanity" (Shue, 1980:18). A right is "a justified demand that *some* other people make some arrangements so that one will still be able to enjoy the substance of the right even if ... it is not within one's power to arrange on one's own to enjoy the substance of the right" (Shue, 1980:16, emphasis added). Elsewhere Shue states "that the *relevant* other people have a duty to create, if they do not exist, or, if they do, to preserve effective institutions for the enjoyment of what people have rights to enjoy" (p. 17, emphasis added, see also p. 55). One is struck, firstly, by the vagueness of who is to be responsible for ensuring these rights of the other. It is here that much of the 'controversy' over positive duties lies. As the italicisation shows, not *all* people are responsible. Who is to be responsible is not clear. In the case of a negative duty not to torture, it is easy to identify the violator of this right of another person. By contrast, in the case of a positive duty to provide a starving person with food, it is not clear who has violated the starving person's right to food and against whom this right should be enforced (O'Neill, 2002:136). Shue, as a rights-based cosmopolitan, counters that if negative duties are acceptable, then positive duties should also be since there is a negative dimension to economic rights and a positive dimension to political rights (for criticism, see O'Neill, 2000:134-136).

responsible for the other until proven otherwise, which has been hard to do, as the ‘controversial’ character of positive duties to the other show (see Shue, 1980). Never is the protagonist subject assumed to be of a lesser importance than the other, whether in theory or in actuality.

By permitting certain limitations of freedom, the extent of which is of course heavily contested, these compromises preserve the autonomy of the subject in a system of justice (what Levinas terms a ‘political peace’ with the other). Furthermore, by arriving at some point where our responsibility for others ends (or where it spills over into the domain of supererogation), the subject is left with a clear conscience about not concerning himself with others. The aim of the rest of this section is to try to show how a number of writers in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate tend to prioritise freedom and/or limit the demands that may legitimately be made of the subject, tendencies that combine to shield the autonomous subject from ethical criticism that would dispel him from his central position.¹¹ These tendencies indicate the centrality the autonomous subject enjoys in political theory, a sovereignty that is transplanted onto political society. The ubiquitous endorsement of liberal autonomy fortifies the supreme position of the theoretical and political subject and forestalls his being put into question by the other, whom the subject affects in the exercise of his freedom. Considering that the subject finds himself simultaneously in an ethical and a political relation with the other (Critchley, 1992:230-231), the pre-eminence of the autonomous (asocial) subject in political thought and political society demonstrates the ‘legitimacy’ of a political response to the other (rather than an ethical response), reassuring the subject of his own justice in disregarding the other. The hitherto cursory Levinasian suggestions of the problematic character of the precedence of individual autonomy will be elaborated in chapter 3. The place of this section in the context of this study is to highlight “the tradition of the primacy of freedom” (TI 302) in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, which forms a small part of the wider discipline of political philosophy. It is to a discussion of some of the principal writers in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate that we now turn. This section ends with a discussion of Rorty’s liberal ironist subject, which attempts to steer a path between the cosmopolitan and communitarian positions,

¹¹ I tend to focus on cosmopolitan and communitarian writers that have written about justice, further favouring those who have written about *distributive* justice, given our background concern with global poverty. As a consequence, important International Relations theorists such as Andrew Linklater and Mervyn Frost are only mentioned in passing.

though ends up succumbing to the same problem as the other authors discussed in this section.

Thomas Pogge's cosmopolitan writings are marked by a deep concern for the plight of the global poor and a persistent critique of the factors that contribute to and sustain global poverty, inequality and injustice. However, in spite of Pogge's morally generous cosmopolitanism, he makes a theoretical move that undercuts the stringency of the normative case he tries to assemble in favour of the global poor. What Pogge (1992) does is to draw a distinction between 'institutional' and 'interactional' cosmopolitanism, preferring the former approach himself.¹² Institutional cosmopolitanism is concerned with presenting "certain fundamental principles of justice," whereas interactional cosmopolitanism is concerned with proposing "certain fundamental principles of ethics" (p. 50). Interactional cosmopolitanism involves the direct relations between people and assigns persons or groups of persons with the responsibility of ensuring human rights. Institutional cosmopolitanism, as the name suggests, locates the responsibility for ensuring human rights with institutional schemes, which set the framework that governs and guides human interaction. According to the institutional approach, responsibility for others is indirect – responsibility is realised through the justice of the institutions one supports and participates in, which means that "one ought not to participate in an unjust institutional scheme (one that violates human rights) without making reasonable efforts to aid its victims and to promote institutional reform" (p. 50). While Pogge sees institutional and interactional cosmopolitanism as potentially supplementary, he leaves this issue undecided and argues that privileging the institutional view "leads to a much stronger and more plausible overall morality" (p. 50). According to Pogge, a major advantage of institutional cosmopolitanism lies in not having to demand any "notoriously controversial" positive duties to correct a wrong such as preventable starvation, but merely to require that persons not participate in unjust institutions that permit such starvation without making "reasonable efforts" (p. 50) to reform the institutions in question. Insofar as citizens from rich countries participate in institutions that have extra-national consequences, they become morally connected to poor people affected by these institutions (pp. 52-53). Pogge's "broadly consequentialist assessment

¹² O'Neill can also be classified as an institutional cosmopolitan. The significant place institutions enjoy in her constructivist cosmopolitanism is indicated by her view of, for example, the 'right to food,' about which she says that "without one or other determinate institutional structure, these supposed economic rights amount to rhetoric rather than entitlement" (O'Neill, 2000:125).

of social institutions” (p. 54) draws attention to the fact that our lives are entangled and that our actions affect other people, seeking to “broaden the circle of those who share responsibility for certain deprivations and abuses” (p. 52). Having outlined Pogge’s cosmopolitanism, I want to consider some of the ways in which it preserves the subject in autonomy, undermining the potential for him to be put in question by the other: (i) The *personal* acknowledgement of responsibility that might have followed from recognising our complicity in the suffering of others, whom we have (unknowingly) oppressed or harmed, is dissipated by locating responsibility at an institutional level and dispersing responsibility among an increasing number of people. Responsibility for the other is turned into a political matter, that is, a concern of the plurality, not of the self. By emphasizing responsibility for others as institutionally mediated, Pogge, apart from dissolving much personal responsibility, (ii) purchases considerable freedom from responsibility outside these institutions. (It permits an ‘egalitarian’ to earn a large salary, whilst poor people starve, without necessarily considering himself irresponsible or unjustified in doing so, because, for an egalitarian institutionalist, responsibility is the task of institutions.)¹³ (iii) Furthermore, the ambiguity of requiring that persons make “reasonable efforts” (p. 50) to reform unjust institutions leaves a gap for doing nothing, leaving persons with ‘reasonable’ excuses for not doing anything. (iv) What is more, Pogge underplays the interactional element (‘positive’ duties) necessary to bring about greater institutional justice, a shrewd strategy since his aim is to convince that it would take little to improve the plight of the global poor. He states, “For the first time in human history it is quite feasible, economically, to wipe out hunger and preventable diseases worldwide without real inconvenience to anyone” (Pogge, 2001b:14). While we are outraged by the injustice and inequality Pogge demonstrates throughout his work,¹⁴ the matter and effort would seem to require more than merely taking from the rich and giving to the poor.

Pogge (1992:50, note 5) classifies Shue and Luban as interactional cosmopolitans. As mentioned, interactional cosmopolitanism rests responsibility for the realisation of human rights on the shoulders of agents, not institutions. Saying nothing of institutions,

¹³ I think this is a consequence of Pogge’s institutionalism, even though he is critical of the same in Fishkin, who claims that people have “an infeasible right” (Pogge’s words) to a “robust zone of [moral] indifference” (Fishkin in Pogge, 1989:261).

¹⁴ Pogge, for example, cites a recent *Human Development Report* on the extremity of global inequality: “The assets of the top three billionaires are more than the combined GNP of all the least developed countries and their 600 million people” (Pogge, 2001b:14, note 20).

Luban (1985a:209) defines human rights as “the demands of all of humanity on all of humanity.” Similarly, for Shue (1980:13), “to have a right is to be in a position to make demands of others.” People enjoy human rights regardless of the institutions under which they live. In fact, the universality of human rights sets a “moral limit” to the pluralism of societies and institutions (Luban, 1985b:242). Both Luban (1985b:209) and Shue (1980:14-15) draw a distinction between human rights and (civil/legal) rights that are institutionally guaranteed, neither of which enjoy an automatic priority over the other. For Shue, we have a duty to create institutions where they do not exist, in order to protect the rights of others.¹⁵ Luban’s approach is commendable for its criticism of the state-centredness of the international relations, an order in which “individual human beings amount to little more than an ontological curiosity” (Luban, 2002:83). His cosmopolitanism is also quite demanding in that he describes a human right as a right “whose beneficiaries are all humans and *whose obligors are all humans in a position to effect the right*” (Luban, 1985a:209, emphasis added). However, this is where a problem with Luban’s position appears. By leaving the effecting of rights incumbent upon those in a position to do so, Luban leaves an escape route, for is there not always a justifiable case to be made for *not* being in a position to effect the human rights of others? Is it not always possible to latch onto some spurious principle to explain why one is not in a position to promote and protect the rights of others?¹⁶ It is conceivable that, with the exception of a few extreme cases, one is always in a position to promote another person’s human rights. According to Levinas, I am responsible regardless of my position. In the ethical relation, the subject finds always more resources within himself to meet his responsibility for the other. Clearly, no one incessantly promotes the rights of others. Why this does not occur, given the obligation Luban identifies, or the Levinasian contention that the subject is infinitely responsible for the other, is a question this study is trying to answer. In Luban’s case, permission is granted to the subject to decline his responsibility, and to do so legitimately. The opening up and

¹⁵ For institutional cosmopolitans, asserting rights where there are no institutions to implement them, amounts to “manifesto rights” (O’Neill, 2000). For O’Neill (2000) and Pogge (1992), rights follow institutions, and not the other way round.

¹⁶ Shue provides a similar escape route, which was quoted in footnote 10 above. For Shue, a right is “a justified demand that *some* other people make some arrangements so that one will still be able to enjoy the substance of the right even if ... it is not within one’s power to arrange on one’s own to enjoy the substance of the right” (Shue, 1980:16, emphasis added). Elsewhere Shue states “that the *relevant* other people have a duty to create, if they do not exist, or, if they do, to preserve effective institutions for the enjoyment of what people have rights to enjoy” (p. 17, emphasis added, see also p. 55).

legitimising of this avenue of escape from responsibility for the other put a political response to the other on a par with an ethical response.

Another example of an exacting cosmopolitanism is that of Peter Singer, as set out in his well-known article, "Famine, affluence and morality" (1972/1985). The central argument is that "if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening [Singer constantly refers to the Bengal famine of the early 1970s as an example of something bad], without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it" (p. 249). Furthermore, each individual is morally obliged to act according to this principle, regardless of what others do (p. 250). So, when we are confronted with a choice between buying another pair of trousers or giving that money to famine relief, we ought to give money to famine relief, without this deed being able to claim the status of 'charity', 'generosity' or 'supererogation'. By Singer's standard, it would simply be "wrong" not to give the money to the famine relief effort (p. 253). One of the difficulties utilitarian thinkers such as Singer face is to specify where the line between duty and charity is to be drawn, for it requires the measurement of the moral importance of things. For Singer, this is a "very difficult" empirical question; but one that he presumably thinks can be answered (p. 255). The limit of what we owe others appears when we reach the "level of marginal utility" (p. 259). We here find Singer establishing a very literal and substantial equality between him and others (currently) less fortunate than him.¹⁷ What Singer proposes is a level at which reciprocity can be established, where all have become equal(s) and where the subject's concern for the other may legitimately end.

Against a view of justice as mutual advantage, whereby people cooperate because the benefits to oneself are thereby greater than being in constant and all-out conflict with one another, and the outcomes of justice hence reflect differences in power between social agents, Brian Barry advances a view of justice as impartiality. Barry aspires to this, partly, because viewing justice as the self-interested distribution of the spoils of social cooperation leaves the weak and the poor, who perhaps do not contribute much to international society and the world product, without much claim to be included in the consideration of justice (Barry, 1995: 46 and 50). The view of justice as impartiality

¹⁷ Singer would like other affluent people to join him in providing for the poor, but is quite pessimistic about the potential for this. At a minimum then, Singer desires equality between *him* and the poor.

holds “that there has to be some reason for behaving justly that is not reducible to even a sophisticated and indirect pursuit of self-interest” (Barry, 1989b:7), and much of the reason lies in us wanting to justify ourselves to others (p. 285). If we take the defensibility of our actions seriously and hence do not appeal to force to justify our actions, then impartially just principles would be those that others in a similar position “could not reasonably reject” (Scanlon in Barry 1989b:284). However, one of the major challenges facing cosmopolitanism is to specify how partial we are permitted to be (that is, without facing ‘reasonable’ censure from persons affected by our actions) towards those with whom we have special relationships, given that at some point our commitment to those close to us comes into conflict with the interests of outsiders. Barry’s solution is to invoke a Scanlonian method so as to have people decide “just the right amount” of partiality after having weighed everyone’s perspective equally. Presumably people would be able to agree that one is justified in singling out certain people for preferential treatment (Barry, 1995:191-207). Regardless of the vagueness of stipulating ‘just the right amount’ of partiality and the problems of such a decision-making process, what Barry arrives at is, as with the abovementioned cosmopolitans, a limitation of the demands outsiders may legitimately make of the self. After the subject has settled his scores with outsiders as determined by the principles of justice as impartiality, the subject has secured for himself a retreat where he may regard himself justified in *not* concerning himself with the plight of the other, a sphere where the subject thinks itself autonomously free from the ethical demand of the other.

The cosmopolitan writers discussed above recognise a deep responsibility for the other, but at the same time permit the self a zone of autonomy, of legitimate indifference to the other. From a Levinasian perspective, there is a qualified legitimacy to a political response to the other, to turning away from my responsibility for him, to concern myself with myself. However, this limit and ‘turning away’ is always provisional and uneasy, as I remain aware of my neglect of the other in the political response. In an uneasy and provisional response it is recognised that, ultimately, the life of the other is more important than my own. In the cosmopolitan writing discussed above, a political response to the other is considered to at least be on a par with an ethical response to the other. In granting a primacy/equivalence to a political response to the other, cosmopolitans are affirming the self as morally central and are permitting the subject to rest in good conscience despite the preventable dying and suffering of the global poor.

The preceding criticism of the autonomy granted to the subject by cosmopolitan writers, reminds one of the communitarian castigation of liberalism's unencumbered subject, a conception of the subject considered too asocial to carry the sociality assumed by, for example, the difference principle (Sandel, 1984b). I think one could also level a communitarian charge against cosmopolitans, to the effect that their endorsement of a universal subject is too asocial to activate the global social progress cosmopolitans desire. From a communitarian perspective, such a high degree of concern for the (global) other assumes and requires a stronger sense of community, which hardly exists at the global level, and especially not between the rich citizens of the wealthy democracies and the poor of the Third World.

It will be recalled that, in the presence of the third, it is necessary to decide how to respond to the other. Though we now possess over the means to intervene in far-off places with great efficiency, it is generally accurate to say that the state remains the most efficient and feasible mechanism for realising our responsibility to others, especially in the light of the communitarian contention that some stronger sense of community is needed for there to be a deeper concern with others. However, one of principal problems with communitarian writing is that the empirical contention that our responsibility for the other is best realised in the localised setting of the state is always coupled with a normative insistence that justice *ought* to be so bounded, which functions as a justification for being less concerned with others outside national borders. Barry (1989b:241) draws attention to the sinister link between self-interest and confining responsibility for the other to a state, when he writes that “[i]f we press the question of why justice has to be confined to those who are engaged in cooperative relations we cannot long escape the conclusion that the driving force behind it is the idea that everyone must gain from justice.” And while the presence of (communal) self-interest might appear quite obvious in such a circumscription of responsibility, the primacy of the autonomous subject in communitarian thought might be less so. In fact, the relative importance communitarians attribute to community requires certain sacrifices by the subject for the sake of others. Still, it will be argued that communitarian writers also preserve the subject as central, and even though they view the subject as more encumbered and responsible, such communal duties ultimately refer back to the importance of sustaining the individual in as great an autonomy as possible.

John Rawls, a communitarian in the terms of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate (though a liberal in the liberal-communitarian debate), is explicit about the normative and theoretical primacy he affords the individual. In *A Theory of Justice*, he asserts the precedence of liberty over other values, coupled with the inviolability of the individual vis-à-vis the demands of society, that is, the priority of the right over the good. For Rawls, each individual has “an inviolability founded on justice, or as some might say, on natural right, which even the welfare of every one else cannot override. Justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others” (TJ 24-25). The two principles of justice that Rawls claims rational persons would adopt from behind a veil of ignorance in the original position puts this inviolability of the individual in more formal terms, whereby the priority of the first principle of justice, the liberty principle, over the egalitarian second principle affirms the ‘basic’ liberty of the subject. Increased social and economic benefits cannot justify or compensate for the curtailment of the basic negative liberties Rawls claims as inviolable (TJ 53-4).¹⁸ Apart from his liberal emphasis on freedom and equal liberty, Rawls’s writing further works to shore up the subject against the ethical demands of the other in a variety of other ways: (i) The very acknowledgement of ‘supererogatory actions’¹⁹ indicates that Rawls sees our responsibility to others as limited. Supererogation indicates an act that holds very good consequences for the other, but requires too much from the subject, and thus leaves the subject perfectly justified in not performing such an act (TJ 385).²⁰ (ii) However, we need not look to the extremity of supererogation to see that Rawls thinks us responsible for the other only in terms of what could be reciprocated. We are also “at liberty to do or not to do” good acts, that is, an act that advances another person’s good, which is to say that we are equally justified to respond to the other either ethically or politically. (iii) The priority granted to the subject vis-à-vis the other is also apparent in the claim that a natural duty of mutual aid

¹⁸ Basic liberties may only be restricted “for the sake of liberty,” so that “a less extensive liberty must strengthen the total system of liberties shared by all” (TJ 266).

¹⁹ Rawls (TJ 385) defines a supererogatory action as “one that brings much good for the other person and when it is undertaken at considerable cost or risk to the agent as estimated by his interests more narrowly construed.”

²⁰ Although Rawls recognises that “the moralities of supererogation provide the stage for shame,” a Levinasian demandingness is thwarted when Rawls (TJ 424) writes, “It would be a mistake, however, to emphasize the perspective of one feeling more than the other in the complete moral conception. For the theory of right and justice is founded on the notion of reciprocity which reconciles the points of view of the self and of others as equal moral persons.”

is to be performed when “the sacrifice and hazards to the agent are not very great” (TJ 385). According to Rawls, the subject may persist in good conscience at having secured his interests first. (iv) Furthermore, the natural duty of mutual aid is based on a calculation of self-interest, for commitment to this principle ensures that others “are there if we need them” (TJ 298). (v) The priority of politically relating to the other is clear in Rawls’s view of justice as fairness as being founded on the principle of reciprocity, whereby persons benefit according to their contributions to society (with some protection for the least advantaged), the scale of which is determined in the original position.

Against the (earlier) Rawlsian position, the first wave of communitarian criticism contained the argument that the type of social arrangement Rawls proposes is impossible without assuming prior communal ties (Sandel, 1984b:89-90) and that the atomistic individualism Rawls assumes and normatively endorses will undermine the very society that makes ‘basic liberties’ possible (Taylor, 1979; Sandel, 1984b:94). ‘First-wave communitarians’ contend that more than an insistence on individual rights is necessary to sustain the liberal polity, and argue that a constant commitment to and engagement with national political institutions and other members of the polity are also required. Sandel (1984b:92-4) sees the state’s ability to govern as being frustrated by the primacy individual rights enjoy in liberal society. Taylor (1979; 1995) makes a similar assessment of the negative consequences of individual rights, particularly when these rights are coupled with a purely instrumental view of society, that is, when rights are claimed without recognising the political obligations to the society that sustains these rights. However, one senses that for Taylor the value of freedom is more important than for Sandel, and as such Taylor reminds us that the freedoms enjoyed in liberal societies are not the outcome of some historical necessity, but in part based on the choices made by a political community. Referring to the liberties enjoyed in the societies of the West, Taylor (1979:56) remarks, “We constantly forget how remarkable that is, how it did not have to be so, and one day may no longer be so.” Taylor’s concern about the deleterious consequences of a freedom that does not recognise concomitant obligations is that such freedom might undermine the commitment and institutions that sustain liberal society. Taylor’s concern about the adverse effects of freedom is for the sake of freedom. For Taylor (1979:57), “the free individual of the West is only what he is by virtue of the whole society and civilization which brought him to be and which

nourishes him; ... [which] creates a significant obligation to belong for whoever would affirm the value of this freedom; this includes all those who want to assert rights either to this freedom or for its sake.” However, fulfilling one’s obligations to the political society one belongs to and not merely being concerned with oneself remain a self-interested undertaking, “since the free individual can only maintain his identity within a society/culture of a certain kind, he has to be concerned about the shape of this society/culture as a whole... It is important to him that certain activities and institutions flourish in society” (Taylor, 1979:58). Taylor’s view of society remains instrumental, something atomists have been accused. Furthermore, Taylor also views other members of his society instrumentally, as, for example, when he endorses “patriotism,” which for him “is based on an identification with others in a particular common enterprise. *I’m not dedicated to defending the liberty of just anyone*, but I feel a bond of solidarity with my compatriots in our common enterprise, the common expression of our respective dignity” (Taylor, 1995:188, emphasis added). What seems clear is the absence of ethics (in the Levinasian sense) in Taylor’s view. Other people are important principally insofar as they can help sustain a society in which the self-interested individual can flourish as free. Reciprocity between members of a polity is merely moved to a more demanding level than one finds in Rawlsian liberalism, but it is still reciprocity. Taylor’s endorsement of a greater acceptance of the sacrifices and obligations owed to a society whose members enjoy considerable freedoms, in the end appears very much like the enlightened self-interest he criticises in liberal atomism.²¹

While the communitarian stress on the sociality and contextuality of moral concern is to be welcomed, it comes at a high price, for an endorsement of such a view of moral relations strongly tends to confine moral concern to other members of one’s political community, to the detriment of the poor who happen to find themselves outside the borders of those states most capable of alleviating their plight. Richard Rorty also recognises the deeply social/communal character of moral concern, but tries to avoid the exclusion that typically accompanies such a communitarian position, without thereby lapsing into the relative ahistoricism of cosmopolitan universalism. What further attracts

²¹ One may indeed wonder about how great the difference between Taylor’s ‘holist individualism’ (an intellectual trend that recognises our social embeddedness but still prizes individual freedom and difference) (see Taylor, 1995:185) and Rawls’s position is, especially Rawls’s later views. Much of Taylor’s article is directed against Nozick, whose views are so asocial, that one may wonder if Taylor is not attacking a straw man.

us to Rorty's work is his self-professed concern with the suffering of outsiders and his recognition that there are "tendencies to cruelty inherent in searches for autonomy" (CIS 144). These two commendable aspects of his thought find their expression in the type of subject Rorty endorses, the 'liberal ironist.'

According to Rorty, humans cannot help being "accultured" as we are and that certain ways of being seem natural, possible, and/or good to us, whereas certain choices and forms of life seem foreign or unavailable. For Rorty, there is no "God's-eye point of view" from which to judge others or ourselves, as cosmopolitans seem to think (ORT 13). Instead, we have to start with the moral baggage of the community into which we have been socialised and with which we identify (CIS 198; ORT 202). An awareness of the dangers (and undesirability) of being too enamoured with one's coincidental forms of life, which communitarians often do not take seriously, leads Rorty to sketch a type of person, the 'liberal ironist,' who thinks "that cruelty is the worst thing we do" (the liberal part)²² and who "faces up to the contingency of his or her own most central beliefs and desires" (the ironist part) (CIS xv).²³ Liberal ironists are unable to say why we should not be cruel, nor when the oft-conflicting imperatives of either self-creation or social justice should prevail, or when to favour members one's group over random other people (CIS xv).

Ironists recognise the contingency of the identities and the vocabularies they have been socialised in, and, motivated by a fear of moral parochialism, try to acquaint themselves with lives and people that seem strange from their perspective (CIS 80). Ironic redescription makes us aware of the contingency of our social and moral affiliations, our (unwitting) cruelty to others and sketches those people who we have thought of as strange (if we even gave them any thought at all) in a fuller humanity. Ironic redescription destabilises fixed perceptions of ourselves and others so as to pave the

²² Kekes (2002:74) stingingly attacks the "intellectual vacuity" of this definition of a liberal, which Rorty has taken from Shklar. "This slogan is mere verbiage that cannot withstand the most elementary questioning. Why is cruelty the worst thing we do? Why not genocide, terrorism, betrayal, exploitation, humiliation, brutalisation, tyranny, and so forth? If it is said in reply that all serious evils are forms of cruelty, then the liberal becomes one who believes that serious evil is the worst thing we do. But who would disagree with that?"

²³ Rorty (CIS 75) writes that the "ironist spends her time worrying about the possibility that she has been initiated into the wrong tribe, taught to play the wrong language game. She worries that the process of socialisation which turned her into a human being by giving her a language may have given her the wrong language, and so turned her into the wrong kind of human being."

way for the reconstitution of solidarities. When we recall that for Rorty moral concern is a matter of “we-intentions” (ORT 200), of solidarity, irony becomes more than a recognition of the contingency of one’s personal identity – irony also becomes a recognition of the contingency of one’s moral identifications and the arbitrary disregard for the suffering of persons excluded from our ‘we.’ Therefore, when irony is coupled with a liberal concern for the suffering of others, we find a type of subjectivity freed to direct itself towards a concern with the global poor.

However, the moral promise of liberal ironic subjectivity necessarily is soon waylaid. For Rorty, as I have mentioned, to be a liberal means to be concerned with the suffering and oppression experienced by others. However, for Rorty, to be a liberal also means to insist on a stark separation between the private and the public, and seeing no reason why pursuits in one sphere of life are more important than pursuits in the other (CIS 83, 194).²⁴ For Rorty there is no necessary link between a person’s public and private sides²⁵ and uses Heidegger’s involvement with the Nazis as a case in point.²⁶ Even if we

²⁴ The pursuit of self-perfection is strived for in the private realm, where the subject struggles to invent a new description of himself, trying not to rely on those of other people (CIS 28). However, is successful self-(re)creation as available as Rorty thinks? Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida (Rorty’s examples) have certainly created unique private vocabularies and new metaphors, but these are still presented in the terms of the philosophical canon and indeed language itself, neither of which can entirely be freed from their social character. These “strong makers” use “words as they have never before been used” (CIS 28), but many of the words and their uses remain the same. These ‘strong makers’ certainly resist easy understanding, but the fact that we can read what they have written remains. How original is Derrida if we recognise his roots in Nietzsche and Heidegger (also see McCarthy, 1990/2002:187)? Rorty recognises this problem. Though “[m]etaphors are unfamiliar uses of old words, ...such uses are possible only against the background of other old words being used in familiar ways. A language which is all metaphor would be a language which had no use, hence not a language but just babble” (CIS 41). Moreover, in order to maintain this split, Rorty wants to convince us that private vocabularies developed by ironists are “irrelevant” to public life (CIS 83), but at times he seems ambivalent. Rorty wants us to view these writers as only helping us become “autonomous” (CIS 141), and of not saying much about our cruelty to others. Though new vocabularies need not have an influence or create solidarity, the new vocabularies created by writers such as Nietzsche and Heidegger, can be socially useful by exposing us to new articulations of the human situation. Consider a “literary” philosopher (CIS 84) such as Nietzsche: Though many of Nietzsche’s battles were with himself, we gained new insights into being human from him. Nietzsche did not seek to reduce cruelty (one could probably argue the opposite), but after reading him we have more empathy, if not necessarily sympathy. Many of the strange new metaphors created by ironist writers find their way into greater literalness and common-usage. Although these terms are soon vulgarised (CIS 126), they do provide us with more ways of describing the human condition, they expand our imaginations, they help overcome “a certain blindness in human beings” (William James in CIS 38; see also RSC 44). The strong maker cannot claim more than “that his differences from the past, inevitably minor and marginal as they are, will nevertheless be carried over into the future – that his metaphoric redescriptions of small parts of the past will be among the future’s stock of literal truths” (CIS 42). But, for these reformulations to be socially useful, even if they were never intended to be, the inadvertent correspondence of a private expression with a public necessity is required (CIS 37).

²⁵ Rorty wants to insist on the absolute sanctity of the private, so as to allow someone to think what he wants in private, as long as it does not harm anyone else. “For my private purposes, I may redescribe you and everybody else in terms which have nothing to do with my attitude toward your actual or possible

disregard Heidegger's association with the Nazis, we have to wonder if it was not because of people like Heidegger being legitimised in thinking what they wanted in private, legitimised in obsessing with their own being in a hut at Todtnauberg, that the indifference that enabled the decimation of the Jews was possible. Can one truly say that during the Third Reich the demands of self-creation and social concern were "equally valid" (CIS xv)? Indifference permits too many injustices that are not necessarily anyone's doing. Rorty thinks that as long as someone did nothing wrong, he has no responsibility. Again, only a few Germans actively killed Jews, but the turning away from the problem, wanting to be left alone, making it someone else's problem, created the conditions for horror. Our 'legitimate,' private self-absorption permits thousands to die daily from preventable, poverty-related causes, a catastrophe to which most of us are indifferent. Statements such as that the "desire to be autonomous is not relevant to the liberal's desire to avoid cruelty and pain," (CIS 65) and "our responsibilities to others constitute *only* the public side of our lives," (CIS 194, emphasis in original) justify indifference through a reification of the theoretical public-private split, especially when there is no 'automatic priority' for public responsibilities over the imperatives of the private (CIS 194). The negative consequences of restricting our responsibilities to others to the public side of our lives, is exacerbated by Rorty's vision for a small public sphere and a large private sphere (CIS 100), which even his view of a liberal as someone who is deeply concerned with the suffering of others

suffering. My private purposes, and the part of my final vocabulary which is not relevant to my public actions, are none of your business" (CIS 91). However, Rorty softens his stance in the next sentence by running irony with liberalism: "But as I am liberal, the part of my final vocabulary which is relevant to such actions requires me to become aware of all the ways in which other human beings whom I might act upon can be humiliated. So the liberal ironist needs as much imaginative acquaintance with alternative final vocabularies as possible, not just for her own edification, but in order to understand the actual and possible humiliation of the people who use these final vocabularies" (CIS 91-2). Rorty often avoids the problems with being an ironist and not a liberal, by usually mentioning the two postures together (e.g. CIS xv and 85).

²⁶ Heidegger, the great philosopher, tells us much about how to seek *private* perfection, and in this regard strikes us as "an immensely sympathetic figure" (CIS 120). Heidegger, the *public* figure, the "Schwarzwald redneck" (CIS 111) on the other hand, was "resentful, petty, squint-eyed, obsessive – and at his occasional worst, ... cruel" (CIS 120). However, Rorty sees Heidegger's public and private lives as unrelated; it should be unimportant to us "whether these writers managed to live up to their own self-images" (CIS 79). Rorty wants us to stop wondering about one of the great puzzles of the twentieth century, namely how one of the greatest philosophical minds could be so unbelievably stupid and obtuse regarding his involvement with the Nazis and his subsequent silence about the Holocaust. While people, such as Paul Celan, hoped and waited for the "thinking man's coming word in the heart," Rorty thinks Heidegger justified in his silence. For a critique of such a quest for a personal aesthetic, a deep thinking that does not necessarily think of ethics, see Cohen (2001).

cannot offset.²⁷ In our complex (global) society there are many things that cause suffering, but that are no one in particular's fault. Levinas contests the notion that the subject is only responsible only in so far as he caused a situation, for the other is always his concern.

Claiming a private sphere amounts to insisting on an arena where the ethical responsibility to the other enjoys no special priority, where concern for the other becomes a private choice, where saying 'yes' or 'no' to the other is equally acceptable. Although Rorty points out the contingency of the personal and social constitution of the self, he is unable to push this contingency to the point where 'being' itself becomes problematic due to his insistence on the inviolability of the private and the legitimacy of private 'searches for autonomy.' Rorty recognises the contingency of identity and moral association, but ignores the contingency of existence. In fact, he reinforces and justifies it. Rorty still thinks of letting "citizens be as privatistic, 'irrationalist', and aestheticist as they please as long as they do it in their own time – causing no harm to others and using no resources needed by those less advantaged" as unproblematic (CIS xiv). From a Levinasian perspective, insisting on one's right to be and being ethically concerned for the other tends towards opposite poles, as, in the ethical relation, the subject is affirmed in as much as he is hollowed out in responsibility for the other.

This section has argued that in both cosmopolitan and communitarian writing there is an overwhelming concern with the preservation of autonomous freedom, despite the variation that exists with regard to what is required of citizens and what the extent of our responsibilities to others are. The priority given to the autonomy of the subject

²⁷ Rorty does seek to soften 'tendencies to cruelty' that result from the exercise of naïve freedom by saying it is important for the liberal to "notice" suffering, to *think* that "cruelty is the worst thing we do." Yet, we are left with no way of persuading the person who observes such a state of affairs to actually *do* something. The problem we have hit upon here, namely the element of inaction in Rortian liberalism, results from Rorty's 'real-life' reification of the theoretically divided public and private. This inaction defers achieving the social, moral and political progress he aspires to. Consider his definition of a liberal as someone who "*thinks* cruelty is the worst thing we do" (CIS xv, emphasis added), as well as his contention that what "matters for the liberal ironist is not finding [a reason to care about suffering] but making sure she *notices* suffering when it occurs" (CIS 93, emphasis in original). Note that he does not, for instance, define a liberal as someone who *tries to prevent* cruelty. At times, Rorty forgets the human activity and engagement behind the liberal institutions that he thinks contain the seed "for their own improvement," (CIS 63) gradually expanding "the imagination of those in power" so as to get them to include more diverse people into when they use the term 'we' (ORT 207). At other times however, Rorty advocates the creation of groups seeking to express and exercise a fuller personhood for themselves and recognises that they may face "ruthless suppression" (TP 223). However, Rorty does not clarify the *liberal's* role in helping others realise a fuller personhood.

indicates the centrality of the autonomous subject in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. In his procured sovereignty, the autonomous individual is left in good conscience about his disregard of the other, about the limiting of his responsibility for the other, about the effects his exercise of freedom has on the other. This undermines the ethical potential of whatever unease the subject might experience with respect to his dominance over and disregard of the other, an ethical awareness and relation that are necessary for moral progress in international relations in general, and a greater concern with and redress of global poverty specifically.

2.3. Justice and the suppression of otherness

In Levinas's thought, otherness evokes the ethical relation with the other. Generosity in justice suggests the recognition of the other as other, as face, that is, vulnerable and unique. To recognise the other as other is to be in an ethical relation with him, to be infinitely responsible for him. As has been stated a number of times, it is necessary, in the presence of the third, to limit our infinite responsibility for the specific other and ask after the arrangement of justice that will best realise our responsibility for numerous others. In the presence of more than one other there is a need for objectivity, institutions and general principles. In order to achieve the generality and objectivity of justice, what is other, and therefore disruptive of the totality, has to be suppressed and ignored in order to treat various others as equals. This betrayal of the other's uniqueness is tolerable as long as our ethical responsibility for the unique other, which has been betrayed in the quest for objective and general institutional and theoretical designs, so as to concretely respond to the numerous others, is not forgotten. Justice is always a violation of the uniqueness of the other, and must be disrupted by the ethical so as to yield a better justice.

It is by asserting the necessity for justice to be constantly interrupted in the name of the underlying ethical relation with the other that my (Levinasian) position deviates from those held by writers in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. Even though these writers often recognise an initial ethical generosity towards the other in establishing justice, the generosity and acknowledgement of the other as other are quickly

suppressed in (aspirations to) the impersonal universality, reciprocity and equality of justice.

Why is a suppression of otherness in the impersonal order of justice problematic? The aim of this dissertation is to understand the apparent indifference to widespread global poverty-related suffering and death. To be approached by the other as face, as an absolutely unique being, is to be put in question for one's violence, usurpation and indifference. Guilt for our domination and neglect of the other becomes positive in assuming responsibility for him, in fearing for him. It is human otherness/difference that reminds us, as individuals, of our ethical responsibility towards the other, that puts us under accusation. And even though the extremity of our guilt is tempered in the presence of the third, every person is still a unique other to me, and therefore correctly accuses me for failing in my first-person responsibility; I am always guilty, always responsible. So, when what is other is lost sight of in the impersonal order of justice, when the main function of justice appears to be order, keeping 'allergic egoisms' at bay, then politics becomes its own justification and we begin to court the danger of 'inhumanity.' In failing to notice the other as face, in the suppression of what is other, we become indifferent. This section aims to demonstrate the suppression of what is other in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate.

One can appreciate the generosity of the justice cosmopolitans aspire to by noting Barry's (1995:46) observation that, as long as justice is calculated in terms of 'mutual advantage' and power, the poor have no moral basis from which to stake their claim for an arrangement more amenable to their needs. Insofar as cosmopolitans start from a position in which the global extremely poor, whose influence is negligible in terms of the gross international product or as a percentage of global trade, are acknowledged as being part of a system of justice, we are in the presence of a very generous starting point. Cosmopolitans desire that the global poor should be included in calculating the terms of justice, without the poor necessarily being able to offer any reciprocal benefits to those better off. In Levinasian terms, the generosity of the cosmopolitan inclusion of the poor constitutes an 'ethical' response to the other, as opposed to a 'political' response in which the subject would have been insistent upon an initial *quid pro quo*.

However, despite the initial ethical generosity at the ‘starting point’ of justice and the recognition of the other as other this implies, impersonal terms of justice are soon established and the ethical is subordinated to the political in the positing of, or aspiration to, universal principles of justice. It is necessary that there be political and impersonal interaction among people, with the caveat that the ethical relation may not be forgotten. However, when considering some of the examples of cosmopolitan ideas of justice below, it will hopefully become clear that the impersonal political relation predominates in the universalist aspirations of cosmopolitan justice. That the ethical relation with the other has been lost sight of in the generality of justice, concurs with Levinas’s assessment of the ‘will to totalisation’ in Western philosophy, in which there has been a general reduction of what is other to the same, a tendency that still conveys a view of the autonomous subject as socially and theoretically most central and powerful. Our indifference to the suffering of the other partly stems from this tendency to suppress what is other, whereby we are left in good conscience with regard to the suffering of the other.

In cosmopolitan and communitarian attempts to establish global theories and principles of justice and in thinking about the institutions that are to effect such justice, there is a certain lack of what one could call ‘ethical hesitation.’ By this is meant that cosmopolitans and communitarians do not recognise/acknowledge the violence they commit against the unique other when positing theoretical/institutional principles of justice and consequently do not qualify these general principles. Cosmopolitans do not recognise that there will be a violation of the other regardless of the generosity of their theories of justice, regardless of the justness of institutions, in which humans remain reduced to units in a system of justice, albeit a system of ever-increasing complexity, but a system nonetheless. I first consider some cosmopolitan positions to establish that they are indeed guilty of such a reduction of what is other to the same and in the process lose sight of the uniqueness of the other as face and the interpersonal relation this implies. Next, it is asked whether communitarian justice does not display a greater sensitivity to otherness. Thereafter, I consider the potential Rorty’s social thought holds, since he tries to steer a path between cosmopolitan and communitarian positions.

Peter Singer’s (1972/1985) exacting cosmopolitanism was discussed above, a cosmopolitanism that would, by Singer’s own admittance, hold “radical implications”

and for some might require “too drastic a revision of our moral scheme” (p. 254). His central claim is that if we have the ability to prevent something bad from occurring, such as involuntary starvation, without thereby “sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance,” we are morally obligated to do it (p. 249). Failure to do so would simply be “wrong” (p. 253). Clearly, in Singer’s we witness a very demanding moral position, one that demonstrates a huge amount of concern for the other. Two of the challenges faced by utilitarian thinkers such as Singer are to indicate where the line between duty and charity is to be drawn and to *measure* the ‘moral importance’ of things. To measure the moral importance of things constitutes an empirical difficulty, one that Singer believes can be surmounted (p. 255). The limit of what is owed to other people is reached at the “level of marginal utility – that is, the level at which, by giving more, I would cause as much suffering to myself or my dependents as I would relieve by my gift” (p. 259). What Singer proposes is the establishment of a universal and substantially equal relation between subject and other. The type of justice Singer seeks would require considerable self-negation for the sake of the other. From a Levinasian perspective, one could ask if there is not a contradiction in the heavy ethical burden assumed by Singer’s subject, suggesting a subjectivity increasingly hollowed out in expiation for the other, and in Singer’s contention that this burden can be set down at the point of equality, the subject restored as autonomous. Furthermore, in Singer’s approach to justice, we find a tremendous ethical concern at the outset, but this concern is set down at the point of equality. This constitutes what we identified earlier as the suppression of the initial ethical generosity upon working out the terms of justice. The suppression of the ethical by settling for a political relation with the other in equality is amplified by an extremely simplified view of human beings and of what is ‘morally important,’ simplifications that amount to an extreme reduction of what is other to the same. But one does not necessarily need Levinas’s thought to reproach a utilitarian such as Singer on this point. Rawls, for example, has already noted that “[u]tilitarianism does not take seriously the distinction between persons” (TJ 24).

Perhaps I have set up a straw man by criticising the extreme objectification of Singer’s utilitarianism. Perturbed by the distributional consequences of our present-day global institutional scheme, an arrangement that permits and engenders widespread poverty, inequality and starvation, some cosmopolitan writers have tried to imagine alternative “economic ground rules, which regulate property, cooperation, and exchange and

thereby condition production and distribution” (Pogge, 1992:56), institutional ground rules that would yield more just global outcomes. Alternative (hypothetical) schemes are to be judged in terms of their (hypothesized) consequences. In order to imagine a more just global institutional scheme, Beitz (1979b) and Pogge (1989) have both argued for a global application of Rawls’s contractarian method, whereby agents decide on fair principles of justice from behind a ‘veil of ignorance.’ A principal aim of Pogge and Beitz is to show that principles of justice derived from a global original position would take greater account of the material needs of all individuals (i.e. global distributive justice), and not merely confirm the familiar (and conservative) fundamental principles of the law of nations as Rawls maintains (TJ 332). While it is certainly necessary, also from a Levinasian perspective, to seek principles whereby to judge the justness of institutions, one should remain mindful that institutions, even just institutions, by definition, violate the uniqueness of the other. Neither Beitz nor Pogge pay any attention to the objectifying violence inherent to even these just institutions. Beitz (1979b:171) does recognise that when the natural duty of justice, as worked out in ideal theory, moves to the non-ideal world it may be found to conflict with other natural duties, such as duties of mutual aid or not harming the innocent. Beitz here comes close to recognising the inevitable violation of the other when one employs general principles, but instead of acknowledging this aporia as a limit the other as face poses to totalisation, Beitz goes the other way and suggests the issue to be resolved through a consequentialist calculation, thereby absorbing what has the potential to put the system in question. Though one cannot fault cosmopolitans such as Beitz and Pogge for a lack of concern for the other, the suppression of otherness in the aspiration to universal principles and solutions to justice amounts to a stifling of what reminds us of our responsibility for the other, of the shortcomings of justice, and of our neglect and violence against him, and thus leaves us in good conscience, despite our unfinished responsibility.

Our criticism of cosmopolitans like Singer, Beitz and Pogge seem like a mere slap on the wrist. The significance of overlooking and suppressing the uniqueness of the other is that it is the other’s difference, his signifying outside of any theoretical or institutional enclosure, that shows the subject to be unjust in his neglect and violation of the other. This recognition opens up a path towards assuming responsibility for the other. Theorising without taking cognisance of the asymmetrical ethical relation perpetuates

and affirms the centrality of the subject as autonomous, undermines the ethical otherness that drives humanist progress, and perpetuates a predominant understanding of justice as order. Communitarian approaches to global justice profess to pay more attention to difference, by arguing that the thick workings of justice are most appropriately worked out in relatively more decentralised national political communities and that the state is the most appropriate level at which to realise our responsibility for the other. Cosmopolitans might find a global framework of justice in which the state is the primary locale for realising our responsibility to numerous others (e.g. through distributive justice) acceptable, were the efficiency of realising our responsibility the only matter at stake. However, communitarians always link the empirical claim that the state is the most effective locale for realising our responsibility for others with a normative endorsement of this empirical claim. But, while it is obvious that universal principles of justice struggle to take the numerous national variations of justice into account, communitarian categories of justice also suppress otherness by exaggerating intranational similarity and cross-border difference.

One finds such an exaggeration of national commonality in some of Walzer's work (1983; 1994). In trying to justify his view that justice is a matter best dealt with by a particular community, Walzer argues that although we recognise the meaning of a concept such as 'justice' across borders, it only has a minimal ('thin') meaning at a global level, for the specifics of justice (its thickness) have to be worked out in specific locales in line with communal boundaries. It is in specific communal settings where understandings of justice can be enacted so as to reflect the particularity of a community, for instance, because "some things that we consider oppressive are not so regarded everywhere" (Walzer, 1994:16). Never mind that Walzer ignores the oppression behind thick moralities, he also generalises what people in one community actually have in common. The history of social science has been to look for similarities, but I think the closer one looks, the more different one will find members of a polity to be. To speak of a communal identity requires one to clearly indicate where the boundaries of a community lies, what makes people inside similar and what makes people on the outside so different, all of which are not so straightforward in our globalised world. Most importantly, to emphasize communal similarity is to disregard people as others with individual 'faces.'

Though Rawls is a communitarian in terms of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, it is useful to recall that he is a liberal in the liberal-communitarian debate. This is significant, because as a liberal, Rawls is uncomfortable with claiming too great a unity among members of a community, out of a liberal reticence for the oppression that often lies behind the creation of such unity, but also because he does not think that consensus can be reached on the important things in life (JF). Rawls therefore relegates intractable differences, which are potentially divisive, to the private sphere, and sees it as necessary that citizens be united in political culture only. It is interesting to note that otherness is pushed to the private where it does not threaten the political order. Be that as it may, we are more concerned with Rawls's understanding of justice in international relations. Rawls has a very statist conception of international relations; he views states as unitary actors; and thinks about distributive justice as confined to a national society, a consequence of his questionable starting point whereby he thinks of states as quite autarkic (TJ 4, 401). *The Law of Peoples* is where his thinking about international relations finds its clearest expression. In this work he is quite explicit that his "ultimate concern" in international relations is not the wellbeing of persons, but the justice of societies (LP 119), societies that he refers to as "peoples." That Rawls thinks one can theorise based on the notion of 'a peoples' is telling enough, but that Rawls judges the individuals living in "outlaw states" by the government over them strikes me as an objectification too far (The consequence of being an outlaw state is exclusion from the "Society of Peoples" (p. 4).) Furthermore, Rawls acknowledges a "duty of assistance" to "burdened societies," but denies the legitimacy of claims for international distributive justice (Rawls, 1999c:106).²⁸ Instead, and true to form as communitarian, Rawls stresses the importance of politically just national institutions (which can be enabled through assistance from the outside), as political culture is the most important factor determining a country's level of material well-being (p. 117).²⁹ Our duty of assistance to burdened societies reaches its limit once these societies "are able to manage their own affairs reasonably and rationally" (p. 111).

²⁸ Distributive justice requires the existence of relations of mutual benefit among people (reciprocity), relations that cannot be said to exist in international society as they do in a national society.

²⁹ Rawls's position is supported by a UNDP administrator, according to whom, "poverty can be a political problem... This report [HDR 2003] shows that there are many countries where income levels are high enough to end absolute poverty, but where pockets of deep poverty remain, often because of worrying patterns of discrimination in the provision of basic services" (www.undp.org).

Rorty seems quite conscious of not losing sight of the otherness of the other in the categories of justice, a malady we have identified in the abovementioned examples of cosmopolitan and communitarian thought. In Rorty's thought, we find two ways in which he seeks to soften the categorisation and objectification of justice. The first way may be regarded as an attempt to soften the violence of abstract, 'objective' justice, which we have criticised cosmopolitans for. The second way in which he demonstrates sensitivity to the violating potential of justice is by being aware that the normative confinement of justice to a community where the meanings of justice are already 'thick' leads to a disregard of outsiders. Regarding the *first*, Rorty recognises two dimensions of justice, the first views justice as static and objectifying. Here, a "society built around procedural justice" does not want its "agents of justice"/"guardians of universality" to give too much thought to the 'sentimental' stories of those they apply their objective rules to. For example, when sentencing the war criminal to death, this task is made easier when we did not watch him grow up, did not travel "the road he had travelled," for otherwise "we might have had difficulty reconciling the demands of love and justice. But it is well for society that in most cases our ignorance permits us to avoid this dilemma. Most of the time justice has to be enough" (ORT 205-6). Rorty is here endorsing an extreme objectification of humans so as to enable justice. The war criminal is objectified and reduced to his evil deeds. Justice so understood is a wilful forgetting of the human features that may present the war criminal as more endearing to us, viewing him as being someone's son or husband. However, in the same article we find a *second* view of justice as malleable and able to incorporate diversity and of being sensitive to the particularity of a person, amending the stark objectification of the first understanding of justice mentioned above. For example, twentieth-century America was able to include Indians after "the vast majority of nineteenth-century Americans took no more notice of them than they did of criminal psychopaths or village idiots." The gradual recognition and inclusion of strange people were helped along by "connoisseurs of diversity"/"agents of love" (ORT 206), an ever-expanding justice Rorty sees as a feature of liberal societies.³⁰ So, Rorty exhibits an awareness of the violating objectivity of justice. Regarding the *second* way, Rorty is also very concerned about the disregard

³⁰ Rorty is here expounding his usual view of liberal democracy as involving a characteristic and constant extension of its "sympathies" (ORT 204). Rorty locates this drive to seek greater justice as inherent to the institutions of liberal society and as an expression of a morality loyal to its own communal self-image (ORT 199). Rorty writes that "we should simply keep doing what our liberal society is already in the habit of doing: lending an ear to the specialists in particularity, permitting them to fulfil their function as agents of love, and hoping that they will continue to expand our moral imagination" (ORT 207).

of outsiders that result from confining justice to a political community. It is for this reason that he endorses liberal society, for a feature of this society to is “the tradition ... that the human stranger from whom all dignity has been stripped is to be taken in, to be re clothed with dignity” (ORT 202). Ironic redescription destabilises the fixity of moral and social affiliations, exposing the cruelties and disregard behind current practices of justice and permitting the formerly excluded and oppressed to be brought into the ambit of justice.

However, the two advances promised by Rortian thought turn out to be disappointments. Regarding the first, Rorty is still too willing for justice ‘to be enough,’ to simply accept the violence institutions perpetrate against the other. Once formerly excluded persons “have been shepherded into the light,” that is, have come to be regarded as equals before the institutions of justice, “they are [to be] treated just like the rest of us” (ORT 206). In other words, treating the other as equal is good enough, in Rorty’s view. Regarding the second promise held by Rorty’s social thought, here too we are disappointed, for it turns out that, when Rorty speaks about ‘re clothing strangers with dignity,’ he is only referring to internal outsiders/‘strangers’ despite creating the impression that he has people beyond state boundaries in mind. Rorty does recognise the problematic character of state sovereignty in international relations through a quote from Orwell, namely that the “democratic vistas seem to end in barbed wire” (CIS 86), but beyond that he does not question the state boundaries or sovereignty principle that keep external outsiders out, nor does not concern himself with cosmopolitan contributions about how citizenship has changed.

In this section it was argued that otherness is suppressed in theorisation about global justice. In cosmopolitan writings it occurs by quickly moving to establish universal and impartial principles of justice. Communitarians suppress otherness by exaggerating the internal similarity of a state’s citizenry and drawing a sharp, normatively sanctioned distinction between communal insiders and outsiders. Despite trying to steer a way through the cosmopolitan-communitarian opposition, Rorty ends up succumbing to similar problems. We pick up the matter of suppressing otherness from a more explicitly Levinasian perspective in chapter 4. There we shall focus mostly on the cosmopolitan writing, since a disregard of outsiders as others is almost by definition included in the communitarian position.

2.4. The emphasis on equality

Cosmopolitans are generally deeply troubled by the extent of global material deprivation and inequality and therefore try to include the global poor in the considerations of distributive justice. For such a justice to be applicable and indeed be just, the poor have to be demonstrated to be equal ‘conversational partners,’ at least with regard to the issue of distributive justice.³¹ Their inclusion in the deliberation about what would be globally just would presumably point to a global distributional scheme that is considerably more egalitarian than the present one.³²

As one would imagine, the idea of treating outsiders as equals with regard to distributive justice would meet with some resistance from communitarians. Consequently, and apart from asserting it to be so, cosmopolitans follow two paths to argue that outsiders *ought* to be recognised as equals, at least with regard to the issue of distributive justice. The two paths followed by cosmopolitans reflect understandings of ‘justice as mutual advantage’ and ‘justice as impartiality,’ respectively (see Barry, 1989b). ‘Justice as mutual advantage’ reflects the idea that people are to be rewarded in terms of their contribution to a cooperative venture for mutual benefit. Consequently, insofar as a view of justice as mutual advantage is acknowledged, cosmopolitans attempt to demonstrate that the global political economy is integrated enough for it to qualify as such a cooperative venture, which would require the inclusion of poor people who participate in this global political economy. Failing to demonstrate that the world political economy is ‘a cooperative venture for mutual advantage,’ and thus that all persons ought to be considered in the distribution of benefits and burdens because they contribute to this scheme, cosmopolitans resort to a second type of argument, in which they base their claims for greater global distributive justice on a view of ‘justice as impartiality.’ Such a view of justice relies on a great deal of generosity in the moral appeal it makes to the wealthy, reflecting the realisation that the global poor do not have the capacity to force a type of justice that would require significant bargaining leverage against the wealthy. By requiring people to adopt an impartial point of view, a

³¹ As Sen (1992:3) writes, “Ethical plausibility is hard to achieve unless everyone is given equal consideration in some space that is important to the particular theory.”

³² Pogge has demonstrated that global material inequality is more severe than that found in even the most unequal national societies of the world. So, the cosmopolitan argument runs that if we have become a global community, then the current distribution of material goods and life-chances are unjust by even the most egalitarian standards (Pogge, 2002).

framework and principles of justice are arrived at, and insofar as power and self-interest cannot be ignored, proposals of (impartial) justice are required to be acceptable to those who stand to be affected. An important variant within the impartial view of justice draws attention to the negative and unfair consequences various institutions have for the global poor. It also adds that institutions and practices can have harmful effects on non-members/participants, which is unjust and require rectification. By including effects on bystanders, justice as impartiality moves to a universal scope, for it is conceivable that all humans are affected by at least some international institutions and/or transnational practices. Justice as impartiality differs from a view of justice based on mutual advantage, since in the latter view of justice the poor are not considered significantly influential in enabling, shaping and maintaining the benefits that derive from current international practices, yet, in the hands of cosmopolitans both aspire to an acknowledgement of the global poor as equal ‘conversational partners’ about what constitutes justice.

For communitarians, the state remains the highest institution for regulating the benefits (and burdens) of social cooperation between individuals. Among all communitarians, one finds a view of the state as a relatively closed system.³³ Importantly, in all communitarian writings an element of competition between states is assumed, with political realism being the most extreme example thereof. Communitarians typically link the wealth and stability of rich countries to particular characteristics, choices and commitments of the corresponding citizenry, such as Rawls’s (LP 117) connection between national material well-being and political culture. The successes of the West have prompted a “loyal Westerner,” Richard Rorty, to recommend the choices and commitments of Western societies as worthy of emulation. Rorty writes, “Here is what we in the West look like as a result of ceasing to hold slaves, beginning to educate women, separating church and state, and so on. Here is what happened after we started treating certain distinctions between people as arbitrary rather than fraught with moral significance. If you would try treating them that way, you might like the results” (JLL 56).

³³ Even liberals who often assert the universality of certain rights, “restrict the scope of justice [to the national setting], the implication [being] that people’s rights are somehow derivative from their position as citizens” (Black, 1991:355).

However, what communitarians cannot dispute is that part of national wealth derives from interaction with agents outside their national economies.³⁴ The process of globalisation has made the interrelatedness of national economies, and the actors within them, more evident than ever before. It is to the transnational sources of national wealth that cosmopolitans point in order to establish some grounds on which to claim that the poor outside wealthy national societies should enjoy a more just share of the spoils of transnational interaction than is presently the case. Insofar as the global political economy is seen as a 'cooperative venture for mutual advantage' the poor are to be included in the calculations of justice.

At stake then in this part of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate is the degree to which the world's population is cooperating for an increase in the general benefit. The more inclusive the empirical judgement, the larger the number of people that are to be included in determining a just distribution of the spoils of cooperation, insofar as justice is understood as mutual advantage. Consequently, cosmopolitans are at pains to illustrate a high degree of global integration. A well-known example of a cosmopolitan writer illustrating the breadth and depth of global integration is David Held's *Democracy and the Global Order* (1995). Held (1995:127-34) explains increased global interconnectedness in terms of a movement from the "Westphalian order" to a "United Nations system" (p. 127). In the 'United Nations system' it has become possible to speak of a 'world economy' (instead of an 'international economy'), based on the internationalisation of production, finance and trade (p. 127).³⁵ Economic integration

³⁴ Walzer potentially undermines the force of arguments that criticise communitarians for ignoring the transnational sources of national wealth. For Walzer, "the idea of distributive justice presupposes a bounded world within which distribution takes place: a group of people committed to dividing, exchanging and sharing social goods, first of all among themselves" (Walzer, 1983:31). Walzer's localisation of distributive justice follows from his view that all objects of distributive justice are "social goods," with different meanings in different settings (p. 7). "There is no single set of primary goods conceivable across all moral and material worlds" (p. 8). However, even if we grant the radical particularity Walzer attributes to primary goods, the severe need for basic goods in many parts of the world remains, regardless of their social meaning. Walzer drastically overestimates the cultural role of basic goods vis-à-vis the urgent physiological needs these goods fulfil. Needs are not as "elusive" (p. 66) as he claims. Furthermore, the fact remains that the wealth distributed within Walzer's bounded community is often achieved through interaction beyond this bounded world. Global economic interdependence has created benefits and burdens that would not have existed if all states were autarkic (Beitz, 1979b:149).

³⁵ Apart from the rise of a global economy, Held (1995:99-140) discusses four other domains within which state sovereignty is being undermined. Firstly, in international law, the claims and rights of individuals have been strengthened against the state. *Raison d'état* can no longer be used as an excuse for individual wrongdoing, a precedent created by the International Tribunal at Nuremberg (and Tokyo). Secondly, much political decision-making has been internationalised, the growth of international regimes and organisations indicating this fact. International regimes and institutions range from the

has been accompanied by political and institutional integration, as the growing number of international organisations, institutions and regimes testify. Parallel economic and political integration is a welcome occurrence for cosmopolitans, as O'Neill (2000:125) warns that without some form of institutional structure, certain rights will remain unfulfilled, as some institutional agency is needed to apportion obligations and entitlements. By re-linking the globalised economy with the global political structures that have developed in its wake, the incongruence that economic globalisation has caused between political and moral boundaries (Linklater, 1999:36; also Held, 1995:16) can be partially remedied.

There are two major strands of criticism against Held's position. The first holds that his envisioned "post-Westphalian order" is a Trojan horse for the continued dominance of global capital (Hutchings, 1999:25). The other strand of criticism is communitarian in character and comes from realists in particular, who dispute the alleged 'retreat of the state.' Regarding Held's more direct claims, realists are not convinced that the state has lost as much sovereignty and capacity to act as Held's "post-Westphalian order" purports. For realists, the *international* political order provides the framework in which transnational economic interaction can occur (Gilpin, 1986:310). Economic interdependence is largely a consequence and in the service of political power and the interest of the major powers, and not of freestanding technological developments (Thomson and Krasner, 1996:320). Even though a greater sensitivity for human rights has developed, the continued widespread abuse of human rights demonstrates the persistence and primacy of national sovereignty. In fact, respect for and the global enforcement of human rights stand in tension with the sovereignty norm, and for realists (and for many communitarians, one should add), the latter prevails (Krasner, 1993:165).

While communitarian assessments harbour the normative commitment that distributive justice ought to take place at the national level, the same cannot be said of

uncontroversial and technical (e.g. the Universal Postal Union) to the controversial (e.g. the World Bank), and from the formal (e.g. the United Nations and the EU) to the informal (e.g. the Group of Seven). Thirdly, security structures have also witnessed the upward movement of decision-making, albeit only to a regional level, as one finds in the case of NATO. Fourthly, as the national media was instrumental in creating national identities (Anderson, 1983), the global reach of modern media and communications networks are similarly enabling the creation and fostering of transnational identities through the consumption of similar cultural products. However, despite a certain homogenisation of global culture, interconnectedness has also made people more aware of difference, and has in some cases led to assertion thereof in the post-Cold War era.

cosmopolitans. However, this does not mean that all cosmopolitans think that the global economy constitutes a form of social cooperation that warrants viewing distributive justice as a global matter and in terms of 'mutual advantage.' Barry (1989a:445-7) for one, does not think that international 'society' is marked by the mutual dependence one finds in national societies.³⁶ While it is true that the world's financial, production and trade structures are increasingly integrated, some sub-national groups and even states remain insignificant in terms of their contribution to and effect on the global economy.³⁷ An underclass, excluded from the world economy, is found in most non-OECD countries, a class that cannot be considered to be cooperating in a joint transnational activity from which one cannot withdraw. Furthermore, it is doubtful that one could view the relations between the globally marginalised and the more active participants in the global economy as interdependent enough to fulfil the requirement for justice as mutual advantage to be applicable. If anything, one could say that the level of economic integration within the OECD bloc is such that these states could be seen as cooperating for mutual advantage and that the difference principle could apply to their interaction, but this would still not improve the fate or strengthen the claims of citizens of poor countries (Brown, 1992:176).

Where does this marginalisation of the global poor (in the terms of participation in the global economy) leave cosmopolitans who base their claims for increased global responsibility, assistance and redistribution on a view of justice as mutual advantage? Are cosmopolitans now unable to claim on behalf of these excluded persons that they should be included in the considerations of distributive justice? When justice is viewed in terms of mutual advantage, the prospects for greater international distributive justice indeed seem slim. Foreseeing this very problem, Barry notes that the desire to behave 'morally' is more likely in circumstances where actors are more or less equal in power rather than in conditions of "radical inequality" (Barry, 1989b:290; also Bauman, 1998:19). For an enactment of justice as mutual advantage the parties involved are to be of roughly equal power (Barry, 1995:44),³⁸ which even Rawls (CP 213) acknowledges

³⁶ Beitz (1979b:144) used to see the interconnected world economy as such as a cooperative venture, but has since retreated from this position. On Beitz's earlier stance, see Barry (1989a:445-7) and Brown (1992:170-7).

³⁷ In 2000, Africa, for example, accounted for only 2,3% of the world's merchandise exports and 2,1% of merchandise imports (African Development Bank, 2004:151).

³⁸ Justice as mutual advantage, that is, justice as a functional arrangement whereby actors willingly restrain their self-interested pursuits for selfish reasons, and not out of a sense of justice, is problematic

by saying that “it would indeed be unwise to underestimate the importance of such a balance [of forces between the parties] in securing justice.” However, approaches to justice that accept the influence of power in the determination of what is just, provide no moral basis for claims by the (global) weak to be included (Barry, 1995:46 and 50). For Barry (and other cosmopolitans), justice is most needed where mutual advantage does not exist (Brown, 1992:180). In reminding us of this function of justice, cosmopolitans are recalling the ethical responsibility for the other that informs justice; that the function of justice is not merely to maintain order and to calculate benefits and burdens, but also to disperse our ethical responsibility to all others.

To circumvent arguments about justice that reflect global power, cosmopolitans seek an impartial assessment of what would be just, an assessment that does not seek to exploit contingent natural or social advantages in setting the terms of justice. In the case of nationally bound justice, Rawls’s employment of the veil of ignorance in the original position is a well-known strategy for impartially deciding the principles of justice, which would hence be fair.³⁹ Pogge (1989) and Beitz (1979b) have both argued for a global application of Rawls’s theory, so as to arrive at impartial principles of international justice. As mentioned, to convince that distributive justice should occur at a global level cannot rely purely on the level of global integration, interdependence and mutual advantage. Seeking to create conditions that would lead to a readier acceptance of arguments based on impartiality, cosmopolitans attack the premises of arguments that justify excluding poor non-citizens from having a claim to some of the wealth concentrated in rich countries, by, for example, pointing to the ghastly consequences of global poverty and inequality; questioning the trump that the sovereignty principle usually holds over human rights; arguing that nationality is an “arbitrary distinction,” like race or gender, and so on. But despite aspirations to impartial justice and the

since it undermines peaceful cooperation as parties constantly seek to strengthen their own positions; arrangements of ‘justice’ as mutual advantage often do not correspond to what is normally regarded as just; and justice as mutual advantage does not provide a moral foundation for the weak from whence to assert their claims (Barry, 1995:46-48).

³⁹ Rawls writes, “An impartial judgement, we can say, is one rendered in accordance with the principles which would be chosen in the original position...The idea of the original position is to set up a fair procedure so that any principles agreed to will be just. Somehow we must nullify the effects of specific contingencies which put men at odds and tempt them to exploit social and natural circumstances to their own advantage. Now in order to do this I assume that the parties are situated behind a veil of ignorance” (TJ 165 and 118). Barry (1989:423) utilises Scanlon’s understanding of impartiality, whereby we are required to justify our actions “on grounds that others can’t reasonably reject,” derived from Scanlon’s original position in which parties are aware of their positions and interests (there is no thick veil of ignorance as one finds in Rawls) and are motivated to find an agreement.

protection of basic human rights, power, self-interest and sovereignty remain facts of life in international relations. The problem of extracting the extensive sacrifices of self-interest required by justice *as impartiality* is compounded by the absence of an “international sense of community” (Beitz, 1979b:155). The import of this absence is informed by Sandel’s (1984b:90) criticism of Rawls, whereby isolated individuals would not permit an intrusive and communal agreement, such as the Rawls’s difference principle. This absence of solidarity at the global level undermines the willingness of people to make sacrifices for a globally desirable goal, or to comply with what is demanded by international regulations and laws (Nagel, 1991:178). Furthermore, there is a relative lack of institutional capacity at an international level to enforce such extensive compliance.

What about the large number of international institutions that have developed in recent decades? For the Rawlsian-influenced cosmopolitans, institutions are the focal point of distributive justice (e.g. Barry, 1989b:358; Pogge, 1992, 1999). Various institutional ways of shaping domestic economic cooperation can have various domestic distributional outcomes, with regard to which “we have a natural duty to remove any injustices” (TJ:216). Pogge (2001:15) argues that the same holds true for an international society marred by inequality and deprivation. In the Rawlsian understanding, institutions distribute the benefits and burdens of social cooperation undertaken for mutual advantage. But, as mentioned, global mutual advantage and universal inclusion do not exist in the global political economy.

However, Pogge (1999:338-340) reminds us that institutions can have harmful effects on non-participants, that is, those who do not live under these social institutions, institutions that are nevertheless proclaimed to be just (Pogge, 1989:276). “It is ... because all human beings are now participants in a single, global institutional scheme – involving such institutions as the territorial state and a system of international law and diplomacy as well as a world market for capital, goods and services – that all human rights violations have come to be, at least potentially, everyone’s concern” (Pogge, 1992:51). Our global institutional interconnectedness highlight the consideration these effects demand, as through our blindness to these effects, we may be “active[ly] impoverishing, starving, and killing millions of innocent people by economic means” (Pogge, 2001:14). Even international institutions (such as the IMF, World Bank and the

WTO), of which most states are members, maintain and exacerbate global relations of inequality (Pogge, 2001:14). As an institutional cosmopolitan, and reflecting the Rawlsian influence on his thinking, Pogge asserts, “one ought not to participate in an unjust institutional scheme...without making reasonable efforts to aid its victims and to promote institutional reform” (Pogge, 1992:50 and 1989:276).

However, the dispensing of justice by international institutions seems unlikely in the near future. Despite some official recognition of our interdependence and interconnectedness in the change from the “Westphalian order” to a “United Nations system,” the rudiments of the Westphalian order have not changed in terms of their “logic and structure” (Held, 1995:97; also Frost, 1996: 276). Despite the change towards a “United Nations system” involving greater institutionalisation of international interaction, recognition of and concern for human rights, a concomitant limit on the way states may exert their ‘sovereign’ authority over its subjects, and greater emphasis on our common humanity and concerns (Held, 1995:86), the cosmopolitan potential of the United Nations system remains in tension with the “form and dynamics” of the Westphalian state system (p. 98). In this Westphalian system the state remains the virtually exclusive regulator of distributive justice between people.

The potential for pursuing distributive justice at an international level is further constrained by the character of (influential) international institutions themselves. The most influential international institutions maintain and advance the interests of the powerful, and their continued existence remains dependent on a continued congruence between the interests of these institutions and those of the powerful, and on hierarchy and inequality (Hurrell, 2001:44). Even though international institutions “take on their own life” (Cox, 1981:136), without the support of the most powerful states, they are powerless talk-shops, unable to affect hegemonically central issues. However, when issues are not of central importance to the global balance of power, more scope exists for change away from hegemonic interests.

We have started to run up against the *practical* difficulties of getting the global poor to be acknowledged as substantially equal, that is, equal enough to be considered when working out the principles and framework of global justice. Arguments that judge the justness of the global distributional scheme based on a consideration of all humans as

fundamentally equal are very useful to point out how unjust and unequal the global distributive order is. However, insofar as emphasizing human equality at a theoretical level is used as a strategy to convince us that others ought to be treated with greater consideration and be brought into the beneficent ambit of our scheme of distributive justice, this strategy runs into problems, especially in the anarchical international system in which there is no central political authority to enforce a more equal treatment of others on distributive matters. Treating others more equally when they cannot force my more considerate treatment constitutes a generosity, an ethical relating to the other. However, such generosity implies recognition of the other as a face, which is the opposite of emphasizing his equality with all others. We are awakened to our ethical responsibility for the other by his difference from all others, not his equality to them. The ethical relation between the subject and the other, which parallels the political relation, is what drives humanist progress in the political (humanist progress would, in this case, be construed as a more equal consideration and treatment of outsiders). However, the strategy to emphasize human equality deadens our awareness of the ethical command that issues from the face of the other.

2.5. Conclusion

I have come to the end of a reflection on the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. In this chapter, three ways in which the ethical relation with the other is stifled, thus leaving us unperturbed by the preventable suffering and dying of the global poor, have been identified. With regard to the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, our indifference to the plight of the global poor was located in the privileging of the autonomous self; the suppression of what is other when theorising about justice; and the counter-productive strategy of emphasizing human equality so as for the poor to be treated with greater consideration. This chapter has served as a preparation for the taking up of these three problems from a more explicitly Levinasian perspective in the next three chapters.

CHAPTER 3 – LEVINAS AND A QUESTIONING OF AUTONOMOUS FREEDOM

3.1. Introduction

It is my aim to find some answers as to why people do not consider themselves guiltier and more responsible with regard to the millions of extremely poor people who have already died from preventable, poverty-related causes, an indifference that extends to the millions currently facing a similar fate. In section 2.2 of the previous chapter it was argued that writers in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate seek to preserve for the self as much autonomy as possible, an autonomy that was interpreted as indicating a limit to the self's responsibility for the other. A sphere of 'legitimate' indifference to the other is established, by, for example, fixing some point of equality between people, shifting responsibility for the other onto the shoulders of institutions, or by splitting the private from the public. By institutionally and theoretically limiting the responsibility of the self for the other, and through the general prioritising of the value of freedom above all others, the self is propped up in his self-assured right to dominate the world and the other in it, thereby forestalling an ethical awakening to the other. In considering himself justified in his usurpation of the place of the other, the likelihood that the independent subject might consider himself guilty for having dominated and neglected the other, and thereby opening a path towards assuming responsibility for the other, is eroded.

In this chapter I shall move directly to Levinas's depiction of autonomous subjectivity, the form of subjectivity he considers unjust, because of the disregard and oppression of the other it harbours (3.2). The autonomous subject Levinas chooses to put in question strikes one as similar to the Kantian conception of subjectivity that one finds in the cosmopolitan thought of Pogge, Beitz and Barry, albeit that these writers are mostly concerned with the moral aspects of the universalising subject and also evade Kant's metaphysics through the contractarian method. Nevertheless, their Kantianism remains in seeking to establish universal principles (of justice) through reasoned argument alone. Even though the more contextually situated communitarian subject's autonomy is curtailed to a greater extent than the Kantian subject of liberal-cosmopolitanism, it is also vulnerable to a Levinasian ethical

critique of the autonomous subject, because the purpose of a communitarian curtailment of individual autonomy is to preserve the social conditions that make the exercise of individual freedom possible in the first place. In the subsequent section (3.3), the ethical case against the autonomous self, who is charged with neglect and oppression of the other in the exercise of his naïve autonomy, is developed (3.3). Having specified why an autonomous subjectivity is problematic, in the sense of forestalling the experiencing of guilt for having neglected the extremely poor global other, I attempt to draw out the ethical dimension of subjectivity, with the implication that more concern for the other is possible. Instead of destroying the self in guilt for having oppressed the other, the self is reaffirmed as uniquely and infinitely responsible for the other in the interpersonal ethical relation (3.4). As has been mentioned, there is always a third person next to the other, which announces the impersonal order in which the self has to limit his responsibility to the specific other so as to respond to multiple others in the order of justice¹ (3.5).

3.2. Levinas and autonomous freedom

As Levinas's work progressed, he placed less emphasis on the *arising* of the subject as an autonomously free being, separating himself from the world and asserting his mastery over it, a separation and uprightness Levinas used to see as necessary to successfully respond to the ethical demand of the other. In his latter major work, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, freedom understood as that of a "constituted, wilful, imperialist subject" is still a point of contrast with freedom oriented towards the other in responsibility (OB 112, see OB 76-80; 110-112). However, in this work, the *movement* of separation is of a lesser significance; instead, without the preliminaries of positing a self separating himself from the anonymity of the 'there is,' the self is uniquely responsible for the other from the outset (OB 163). As the importance of positing a separated subject subsided, more emphasis came to be placed on the ethical responsibility for the other as having preceded the subject, that is, the subject having had no choice in the matter – responsibility for the other is a modality

¹ Levinas's use of the term justice differs between his earlier and later work. In his earlier work, justice refers to the face-to-face situation (the ethical relation), whereas in his later work, justice refers to a situation where the third is present (the political relation) (IWAHA 171).

of being.² What remains of freedom is the choice whether to respond to the other in responsibility or not, whether to be ‘good’ or not.³ Note that in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, the verb ‘to be’ refers to the enjoying, dominating, totalising way of life of an entity self-centredly caught up in his own projects and which corresponds to Levinas’s earlier descriptions of the naively free and separated subject. Such a being is ‘interested;’ it is for-itself. Hence Levinas’s attempt to describe the ‘otherwise than being,’ dis-interested being, being-for-the-other (EI 100). What is important for our purposes is that, even though the ethical responsibility for the other is a modality of being that precedes the self, *an element of awakening to the other must remain*, for without the awakening to the other and the temptation of irresponsibility, the freedom of the self to be good or not, would be negated: “Freedom is put into question by the other, and is revealed to be unjustified, *only when it knows itself to be unjust*” (CPP 50, emphasis added). Let me briefly describe the separated, self-referential, interested self, unquestioning of its autonomous freedom, but which is put in question by the other.

One is forced to exist. In not taking up one’s existence, not positing oneself as an existent, a subject, one is still reminded of the fact of one’s existence. This reminder takes the form of the horror of anonymous existence, of not existing as a subject, not separated from the world. When the ‘world’ is removed, behind this nothingness, we find “the fact that one is, the fact that there is” (EE 21, TO 46). In the absence of everything there is “presence” – “the place where the bottom has dropped out of everything, an atmospheric density, a plenitude of the void, or the murmur of silence” (TO 46). The self arises out of such oppressive anonymity. Action indicates a taking up of one’s existence – it is the moment in which the existent posits himself in existence (EE 34). The instant of the present gives a being the opportunity to break with anonymity, to begin. The instant of the present shows an indifference to the duration, flow and history of time. It breaks with the past, yet in retrospect it seems as though this instant has always been part of the melody of history (EE 73). In the instant, the present is ripped open and stitched back up again (TO 52).

² This is not to say that responsibility for the other, as a modality of being that precedes the subject, is not present in *Totality and Infinity* (see TI 218-9, 271, 302).

³ “The will is free to assume his responsibility in whatever sense it likes; it is not free to refuse this responsibility itself; it is not free to ignore the meaningful world into which the face of the other has introduced it” (TI 218), for responsibility for others ‘overflows’ freedom (CPP 136).

It might appear as though the self-referential present, unencumbered by the past, grants the self a heady freedom. This is not entirely the case – we are imprisoned by our identification with the instant – in positing oneself as an existent the being one assumes is a “burden” that cannot be cast off, it is a burden because the act of existing requires constant effort (EE 79). To exist is not simply “light like grace” (EE 87). Rather, in taking up one’s being an “instantaneous maturity invades” (EE 79) for one is ultimately responsible for one’s own being. The solitude of being lies therein that one “can exchange everything between beings, except existing” (TO 42); the subject is “riveted” to itself, to being (EE 79). In his self-referential egoism, the subject is ignorant of the other as other.

The world exists for the enjoying, egocentric and free self; the existent lives as though he were at the centre of the world. The existent approaches objects from himself, illuminating objects as though this ‘light’ emanated from himself (TO 64). The world seems as if it is for us, it “offers the bountifulness of terrestrial nourishment to our intentions” (EE 39). The existent does not question his dominating freedom with regard to the things of the world; he does not realise that he could be unjust through the very act of existing. The limits to one’s freedom are merely obstacles to be overcome (EN 139); resistance to subjective freedom is not yet ethical. The enjoyment of things, consuming more than is strictly required, constitutes “the grace of life” (TI 112). One lives from, but also enjoys “good soup,” the elements, work, etc. One is not only in a direct (physiological) relation with these ‘objects,’ but also in a reflective relation with this relation (TO 110-1), “an enjoying of enjoyment” as it were (OB 73).

In his naïve autonomy and self-preservation, the self also exerts his dominating force on the other. Through labour the ego can forestall threats to his freedom and enjoyment (TI 166). Knowledge and labour are ways of coping with the exigencies of the world, of bringing what is other under control, an otherness that includes nature as well as the other person (EN 179-180). In the need for predictability, the other is reduced to a concept in a system that is to guarantee a world in which the self can be free. The other is treated as an object of knowledge, but, in order for the system to be maintained, the other has to be ‘disciplined’

so as to conform to the concept by which he is known and controlled, so as for him to be useful and/or not to pose a threat to the social totality. The egoistic force of the self is reflected in his 'com-prehension' of the other, whereby the other is reduced to and maintained in a concept imposed by the knowing ego. Yet, to understand the other "in terms of his history, his environment, his habits" is to be evaded by the other as other, unique (EN 9).

In light of the aforementioned, the question might arise as to the relation between interestedness, existence, essence, separation, enjoyment, etc. and freedom as it is broadly used in political philosophy. Caygill (2002:32), for example, and referring to an early article of Levinas's (RH), claims that "the concept of freedom that Levinas evolves has little to do with liberal notions of freedom figured as autonomy and more to do with Bergson's notion of freedom as creative spontaneity." Admittedly, freedom in Levinas is closely related with the upsurge of the spontaneous existent, enjoying the world. But the 'Levinasian,' responsible self is also seen as starkly individualised and deeply empowered, initially in its totalising mastery over the world and later in the 'here I am' of substitution for the other. What Levinas's descriptions of the separated subject and the autonomous subject in political philosophy have in common is the supreme and justified position of the individual subject in deciding and realising his or her life-plans with the least amount of interference from other people or institutions. Similar to the Western tradition in which the well-being of the individual, protected by various institutions and having claim to various rights, remains the ultimate point of normative reference, the separated subject that Levinas sketches regards himself as central and considers himself justified in his resultant behaviour. Furthermore, what Levinas's separated subject shares with one of the central notions of liberal political theory is a repudiation of fate. In both Levinas and liberal political theory, the subject is considered capable and justified to act in ways undetermined by the past. In both Levinas's work and liberal political theory, freedom is considered to be "the possibility of commencement" (TI 148).

I am heading in a direction in which I, guided by Levinas's thought, intend to question the asocial/functional disregard of others by the autonomous self sketched thus far. But am I not

setting up a type of subjectivity that is so asocial and egotistical that it comes as no surprise that the other is disregarded by such an individual? What about communitarian perspectives that also question the asociality of the autonomous subject just described? Communitarians have criticised the aforementioned atomistic individualism on at least two fronts: as being empirically inaccurate and socially undesirable. It is the latter criticism that concerns us here. But, it will be recalled from chapter 2 that communitarians demand a more sizeable curtailment of individual autonomy for the benefit of others, in order to secure the social commitment necessary to sustain the (national) liberal democratic society that makes extensive individual liberty possible. But, as was noted in chapter 2, there is a good deal of self-interest behind such a curtailment, for it also serves to secure the self's freedom (and privilege) and it is therefore questionable if such concern for and responsibility towards the other is 'ethical.' Furthermore, such concern required for others is also highly 'political,' in that the communitarian subject does not simply have duties to anyone, but mostly to his co-nationals. The communitarian disregard for the effects of one's actions on outsiders removes a potential source from which the autonomous subject can be put in question.

3.3. Autonomous freedom in question

Though Levinas argues that the enjoyment and egoism of the separated, autonomously free subject presupposes the ethical relation and the alterity of the other, an egoism that is "founded on the infinitude of the other" (TI 216), the case against egoistic freedom can be strengthened beyond merely viewing it as descriptively forgetful. Asocial freedom can also be criticised for the practical consequences of living according to such a seemingly legitimate worldview whereby freedom "consists in negating or in absorbing the other, so as to encounter nothing" (TI 292). In the self-righteous exercise of my freedom, the other *qua* face is negated in that he is treated as an object at my disposal, a unit in a system. In viewing the other as an object or as a concept, his alterity is suppressed; what overflows the bounds of the concept is discarded. In the atomistic existence of free individuals living *alongside* one another, each in his space, the asocial character of such a way of living forestalls the approach of the other. In the existent's dominance over and objectification of

the other, he is seemingly not aware of the other as face. The unique other is negated in categories of power and knowledge.

Although I seek to dominate and comprehend the other, I do not possess him. All my attempts at understanding and dominating the other ultimately slip through my fingers. At the very moment I 'achieve' understanding and domination, the other's transcendence is denied. This "scandal of alterity," the alterity of the other that cannot be fully integrated into my schemes and systems, "presupposes the tranquil identity of the same, a freedom sure of itself which is exercised without scruples, and to whom the foreigner brings only constraint and limitation" (TI 203). The other does not counter my freedom as a freedom similar to and as arbitrary as my own, for that would mean the disappearance of his alterity "under the same concept," that is, into the synchrony of the same (TI 171). Instead, to be confronted with the face of the other is to be confronted by what cannot be captured in a concept or a context.

For the autonomous subject to realise the injustice of his naïve existence, someone must ask the subject "for an accounting" (EN 30). It is the other as face that does this. The approach of the other as face puts my freedom into question, freedom that had hitherto been naïvely exercised. To be faced by the nudity of the other's face is a "crisis of being ... because I begin to ask myself if my being is justified, if the *Da* of my *Dasein* is not already the usurpation of somebody else's place" (LR 85). It is a crisis of being because the subject can already recognise how the mere fact of his existence is implicated in the death of the other (LR 86). If guilty for the mere fact of existence, how could the subject ever hope to defend his "right to be" (EN 144)?

The negativity of guilt for being becomes positive in assuming responsibility for the other. However, assuming such responsibility is not decision of an autonomous self who maintains control over his actions and responsibilities. To be responsible for the other is to be a 'hostage' to him, to lose a certain measure of control over one's life, one's freedom. The ethical relation is a "movement [in which] my freedom does not have the last word" (CPP 58). Responsibility for the other was never agreed to, it does not come from a fault I

have committed or even something I have done (EN 170). Responsibility comes from a ‘time immemorial,’ a ‘pluperfect past,’ since I was born into a world in which the other already existed. In contrast to the *activity* of the autonomous subject, to be responsible for the other is “to catch sight of an extreme passivity” (OB 47), a subjectivity infused with what the self has no control over.

The limitless character of responsibility stems from the guilt that arises from the self’s very existence, from the constant effort to purge himself of the inescapable weight of his own usurping existence; affirming himself by negating himself (TI 244-245).⁴ We can never do enough, and even when we act, our actions are fraught with dilemmas and unforeseen consequences: in a world of limited material goods, giving to one person might mean not giving to another, both of whom are others to me.⁵ Assuming responsibility for the other opens up into ever-increasing responsibility. As I increasingly “divest myself, under the traumatic effect of persecution, of my freedom as a constituted, wilful, imperialist subject, the more I discover myself to be responsible; the more just I am, the more guilty I am” (OB 112). In the ethical relation the subject is hollowed out in responsibility and expiation for the other.

⁴ “The I, which we have seen arise in enjoyment as a separated being having apart, in itself, the centre around which its existence gravitates, is confirmed in its singularity by purging itself of this gravitation, purges itself interminably, and is confirmed precisely in this incessant effort to purge itself” (TI 244-245).

⁵ In the activity of our own desire and impulse to live (our *conatus essendi*) we have eaten bread that the other could have eaten and which we could have given to the other. Traditionally understood, responsibility for the other and for my actions are limited in that the subject naïvely considers itself responsible only insofar as he very directly caused the misery of the other. Traditional political/moral philosophy has also been at pains to find the tipping point between the limits of general responsibility and supererogation. Philosophy has assumed that it is possible to arrive at morally ‘correct’ decisions so as to leave the acting subject with a clear conscience about his behaviour. Against a tradition that thinks there are final answers on how to live ‘justly’ and thereby secure for the self-interested subject a clear conscience, for Levinas, the subject is responsible beyond what he intends (EN 3). In a world as complex and integrated as ours, it is impossible to think through all the consequences of our actions. This means that ‘correct’ or ‘good’ decisions should instead be regarded as ‘better’ decisions in recognition of our inability to control all harmful effects, which would leave the subject unable to claim non-culpability. Indeed, “[i]n society as it functions one cannot live without killing, or at least without taking the preliminary steps for the death of someone” (EI 120). Furthermore, even when there is sincerity of intentions in the acts of the subject, in an order of more than two people, all persons, including the subject, find themselves “at the mercy of an outside will” (EN 28). People and the interpretation of their actions are subject to an order they did not entirely choose. The subject is judged in terms of the objectivity of his actions, not the intention behind the action (EN 21). In responding to the other in the political relation there is hence already a distance between the subject, who acts in sincerity, and the other, who is the recipient of his actions and who interprets these acts in terms in which the objective/impersonal meaning prevails. The subject’s guilt for a certain situation is determined, not on the basis of his intentions, but predominantly on the basis of impersonal standards (EN 23).

It has been argued that the autonomous self lives in ignorance and oppression of the other. Albeit that freedom autonomously exercised is often deeply naïve of its implications, it is problematic precisely for its naïveté, its overlooking of the other's need, without being disturbed by this disregard. What should be apparent by now is that Levinas has radically problematised autonomous freedom. In light of this critique of the autonomous self, we have to wonder what is to become of the subject; does guilt for having usurped the place of the other annihilate the subject? Are we to think of ourselves as not free and instead as forever enslaved to the other in our infinite responsibility before him? Levinas gives two related responses to this. The first, which we have already hinted at, involves rethinking freedom as heteronomous responsibility (as opposed to freedom as autonomy) and the second involves introducing a third person next to the other whereby the legitimacy of my private pursuits are provisionally restored. Focusing on freedom as heteronomous responsibility is an attempt to draw out an oft-overlooked category of being, the interpersonal ethical relation (section 3.4). Having drawn out the ethical aspect of subjectivity, it becomes possible to sketch a political subject awake to his infinite responsibility for the other (section 3.5). These two aspects of a 'rehabilitated subjectivity' will be considered in the next two sections.

3.4. Election and substitution

Levinas's philosophy is a reaction against a Western philosophical tradition in which the sovereign self has been at the centre of all undertaking and questioning. Furthermore, Levinas questions a "morality founded upon the inalienable right of the *conatus* which is also the right and the *bonne conscience* of freedom" (LR 82). In my view, it is exactly such a 'morality' that we have seen constructed in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. In section 2.2, it was argued that despite various gestures of generosity to the other, the self is always restored as central and preserved in an autonomous and indifferent 'good conscience.'

In proximity to the other, the self, the source of all knowledge and questioning is problematised. In proximity, the self finds himself in the presence of something that “cannot be resolved into ‘images’ and exposed;” something resistant to all thematisation and integration (BPW 80). The other is what refuses to surrender himself to the ego’s attempts at knowledge and rendering things intelligible (BPW 80, EN 58). Although the other as other remains outside the grip of the self, the self remains in relation with the other, though not a relation in which the other is reduced to consciousness or captured in representation. Proximity is contact without grasp. It is a “relationship with a singularity, without the mediation of any principle or ideality” (BPW 81). It is a relation of vulnerability, sensitivity to the unique. Although proximity is a difference that cannot be bridged, it is not indifference. Instead, it is responsibility (OB 139, see also OB 166). Proximity is the impossibility of abandoning the other (BPW 167).

In proximity I am in a “state of guilt,” an accusation “prior to all wrongdoing” (EN 58). The negativity that surrounds the imperialist subject becomes positive in responsibility, a responsibility for the other that the ego cannot evade – “there is no choice, for it is always and inescapably my concern. This is a unique ‘no choice,’ one that is not slavery” (LR 247). The ego does not contract his responsibility for the other. Instead, proximity is a relationship with the singular other that comes from “I know not where,” summoning me to “a responsibility toward those whom we do not even know” (BPW 81). It is a responsibility that is not assumed after reflection and decision, but that is always there. The self finds himself in situations that he has no control over, that were not his choosing, but yet he is responsible.

Finding himself responsible in situations that were not his choosing or the result of his actions, the self finds himself accused for his failure, ‘persecuted’ by the other. This, Levinas describes as “subjectivity thrown back on itself” (BPW 88). There is no escape. The self is, by his “*very position*, responsibility through and through” (BPW 17, emphasis in original). Such responsibility for the other, responsibility for what the other does, preceding freedom and “non-freedom” (CPP 133, OB 116), is the basis of sociality; it is the

“fact of human fellowship” (BPW 91). Strange as it may seem, persecution by the other is the foundation of “solidarity” with the other (BPW 82).

But, does the self not sooner or later “set a limit to the passivity of submitting” (EN 59)? Does the subject not become “crushed” by the extremity of his responsibility for him (TO 77)? Levinas answers in the negative:

Pushed to the end, it consists in inverting its identity, in getting rid of it. If such a desertion of identity is possible without turning into alienation pure and simple, what else can it be if not a responsibility for others, for what others do, even to the point of being made responsible for the very persecution it undergoes. The self is the passivity on the hither side of identity, that of hostage (EN 59).

Levinas shares liberalism’s deep affirmation of the individual as a capable being. But whereas the liberal affirmation of the individual is a selfish one, one that always returns to itself (that is, “self-possession, sovereignty, arche” – BPW 80), the Levinasian affirmation of the individual occurs via the other and lies in the self’s ability to negate himself, to give, to be hollowed out in responsibility for the other, to be good (TI 305). In the self’s “emptying itself of *its* being” in the positivity of asymmetrical responsibility for the other, the usurping and dominating self is “rehabilitated” (EN 58-59).

In the intimacy of the one-to-one ethical relation, the subject is uniquely situated to recognise the uniqueness of the other, a uniqueness that has been offended by the generalisation of institutions, categorisation and theorisation, “the offense of the offended, or the face” (TI 247). Since the self is always in the presence of the other, the self recognises himself as the one who, “before all decision, is elected to bear all the responsibility for the World ... a reversal of being ‘persevering in his being’ – which begins in [him]” (EN 60). To be responsible means that no one can take my place and that I cannot discard my responsibility. As Levinas puts it in a beautiful formulation, to be responsible means that “I can substitute myself for everyone, but no one can substitute himself for me” (EI 101).

Before proceeding, a matter that was only touched upon above requires comment, namely, the issue of *consciously* taking up the ethical burden of our responsibility for the other.

Levinas, wonders, “How can the passivity of obsession find a place in consciousness, which is wholly, or is in the end, freedom” (OB 102)? The problem lies therein that in consciousness “everything is intentionally assumed” (OB 102). Intentionality bears the mark of the autonomous, dominating and contemplating self. Such a reasoned and contemplated assuming of responsibility for the other, reminds one of Alford’s (2004) interpretation, whereby substitution for the other is understood as having found something that has been missing in my life, realising it to have been my blindness to the other and his need, and subsequently becoming responsible. Such an assuming of responsibility for the other remains self-referential and egoistic. Levinas often warns against such a conscious taking up of responsibility for the other, for “[t]he just person who knows himself to be just is no longer just” (BPW 17). The answer to the abovementioned issue of consciously taking up our responsibility lies in the very definition of responsibility for the other. The urgency and extremity of the ethical command that issues from the face undoes and overflows our capacity to control and limit our responsibility (OB 87-88). In contrast to the self who takes “up a position with regard to its goodness, know[s] itself to be good, and thus lose[s] its goodness” (OB 57), in facing the other it is rather a case of “the more I am just, the more I am guilty” – an inability to rest in good conscience (BPW 21).⁶ Substituting oneself for the other is “a new orientation of the inner life” (TI 246), and “can only be discreetly. It cannot give itself out as an example, or be narrated in an edifying discourse. It cannot, without becoming perverted, be made into a preachment” (EN 99). Although one is not to substitute oneself for the other “as a victim offering itself in his place,” for this still presupposes a reflective will behind such a decision (OB 145), one is still left with a choice whether to respond to the other or not, albeit that the extent and urgency of responsibility overwhelms this freedom. To be good, is not inscribed in subjectivity, for people are not good voluntarily. Rather, it is in the possibility to be good, in being an exception that freedom lies (BPW 117).

In substitution, the self is individuated, affirmed through a constant ‘purging’ of himself as the centre of its own existence (TI 244), which is not to say that such individuation does not

⁶ Initially, the awakening of the subject to the other “does not amount to being conscious of this putting in question” (BPW 16). This does not mean to say that the taking up of responsibility for the other cannot later become “an act of reflection” (BPW 18; see also BPW 54, 58).

occur when the self acts as imperial, independent and in disregard of the other, the way individuation is usually regarded in political philosophy. However, Levinas delivers an indictment against the latter way of being when he writes that “[t]he being that perseveres in being... outlines the dimension of baseness itself” (CPP 137). In contrast to the egoism of the separated self, for Levinas, being-for-the-other, a freedom ethically oriented towards the other, “is the most profound adventure of subjectivity, its ultimate intimacy” (EN 99). It is, a certain permissible ‘perseverance in being’ that is discussed in the next section.

3.5. Provisional autonomy: Freedom in the presence of the third

In the previous section, the rehabilitation of the self, whereby guilt for his domination of the other becomes positive in responsibility for the other, was considered. However, questions still remain about the place/role of freedom as it is more typically understood in political philosophy, that is, freedom to be for oneself, to pursue one’s own goals. It might seem as though Levinas has closed off the possibility of speaking about freedom in its traditional sense through his critique of the imperialist subject and by insisting upon an infinite responsibility for the other that precedes the subject’s freedom. However, Levinas is not blind to the importance of auto-nomous freedom. His intention in describing the self’s responsibility that precedes his freedom was to draw our attention to an overlooked modality of being (responsibility for the other) as the origin of sociality, which stands in tension with a view of the subject as wholly sovereign, independent and origin of everything. In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, for example, Levinas expresses his aim as “try[ing] to articulate the break-up of a fate that reigns in essence” (OB 8), directing our attention to what is other and refractory to the thematising and totalising trends of Western philosophy and the presumed autonomous self behind these trends. Despite these stated objectives, Levinas recognises that there is very little goodness in the world (BPW 91), that people generally live as though they were auto-nomous (CPP 136), and that individual liberty should be institutionally protected (TI 241). This recognition of a ‘legitimate’ place for freedom, understood as autonomy and independence, is summarised by the presence of the third party to my relationship with the other.

In the presence of a third party, who has always been present, I am faced with another other who is also a face, who “looks at me in the eyes of the other,” also summoning me to responsibility (TI 213). The third party is another other to me, but he is also an other to the other. I cannot commit myself to one other at the expense of all others. In the presence of the third I have to divide my responsibility. Paradoxical as it may seem, in order to be just, I have to limit my responsibility (OB 128). Yet, it is the very ethical relation with the other as face that informs my relations with numerous others, a relation in which I limit my responsibility to the specific other (OB 159). “In the very name of the absolute obligation towards one’s fellow man, a certain abandonment of the absolute allegiance he calls forth is necessary” (EN 203). The limitation of responsibility is the beginning of equality between others, but which is an equality that also includes me. In equality, unique subjects are reduced to the same, drawing the self away from a uniqueness realised through substitution in which no one can take his place to an equality in which beings are regarded as similar, replaceable and equally responsible. However, it is my inequality before the other that maintains the equality of a plurality (BPW 90).

Equality stems from the presence of the third, which requires the limitation of responsibility, and gives rise to rights and justice for me as well (OB 160). The history of the state with its institutions and laws has partly been an aspiration towards equality between unique individuals so as to allow citizens similar freedoms (EN 190). In the presence of the third beings live alongside one another, not ‘face-to-face,’ in which there occurs a distancing from the ethical demand that issues from the proximity to the other. In one sense (the political), a limit to the other’s demands on the self is set. It allows the subject a provisional freedom to be for-itself, but ultimately returning to the other (see Burggraeve, 1981:41). “The ego can, in the name of this unlimited responsibility, be called upon to concern itself also with itself” (OB 128). In the presence of the third *my* ‘lot’ assumes significance. In the presence of the third, the relation of responsibility for the other might be lost sight of, though it cannot entirely disappear, for “it is still out of my responsibility that my salvation has meaning, despite the danger in which it puts responsibility, which it may encompass and swallow up, just as the State issued from the

proximity of the neighbour is always on the verge of integrating him into a we, which congeals both me and the neighbour” (OB 161).

Apart from the aforementioned legitimisation of care for one’s own lot, the egoism of the embodied being with a will to survive can never be gotten rid of entirely, which is implied by the endless need to empty myself in responsibility for the other, of which Levinas often speaks. Without the interestedness of being, the “seduction of irresponsibility,” it would not make sense to describe being-for-the-other as goodness (CPP 137). The “temptation to separate oneself from the Good is the very incarnation of the subject or his presence in being” (CPP 137). Furthermore, the subject is a biological being that feels hunger and cold. Yet, “despite oneself, starting from oneself,” one is obliged and has the ability “to give to the other even the bread out of one’s own mouth and the coat from one’s shoulders” (OB 55). Sensibility for the other is mere verbiage if it is empty-handed. Vulnerability for the other acquires meaning only through giving. The giving of bread achieves tremendous force in knowing the delicious taste thereof, in knowing the pangs of hunger. “Only a subject that eats can be for-the-other” (OB 74).

There is a constant potential for lapsing into egoism, seeing in the other an obstruction to my freedom and survival, which is ‘war’ in Levinas’s terminology. Caygill (2002) in particular has drawn attention to the precarity of peace in Levinas, to how close ‘war’ is to peace. The potential for evil lurks around almost every corner. In order to guarantee peace and enable freedom, institutions are necessary. “Freedom depends on a written text” and “takes refuge from its own perfidy in institutions” (TI 241). However, political institutions characteristically reduce unique individuals to objects of manipulation, control and knowledge. It should be borne in mind that institutions are not merely created to prevent evil and predatory relations between people, but are also necessary to divide the subject’s responsibility for numerous others.

Levinas warns against abandoning the world to political fatality (EN 99) and against forgetting the ethical relation in the necessary objectification of politics in the presence of the third. It is not at all certain that the ‘otherwise than being,’ “the penetration of the

human into the being,” will triumph, as for Levinas there exist “periods during which the human is completely extinguished” (EN 114). The rationality and objectivity of politically necessary institutions tend to alienate the good intentions in which they were created, so that people experience their own institutions as a ‘tyranny’ (BPW 15). One should guard against such an alienating, rational and measured equality. The necessary violence and objectification of institutions should “always be held in check by the initial interpersonal relation” (EI 90), for justice “is not a natural and anonymous legality governing the human masses, from which is derived a technique of social equilibrium, placing in harmony the antagonistic and blind forces through transitory cruelties and violence, a State delivered over to its own necessities that it is impossible to justify” (BPW 169). The *de jure* equality of justice is enabled by the inequality of the self before the other in the ethical relationship. Justice implies a recognition of the other. It is goodness, as responsibility for the other, “disrupting the general economy of the real and standing in sharp contrast with the perseverance of entities persisting in their being” (EN 157) that makes justice possible. However, in the objective order of justice, goodness, the one-for-the-other, is regarded and discarded as an aberration in the system of justice, gratuitous, supererogatory.⁷ In traditional approaches to justice, the assumption that there ought to be a limit to the subject’s responsibility for the other is never controversial. Rather, what is controversial is where this limit ought to be set. But, to put it in blunt practical terms: how could one conceivably speak of a limit to responsibility in a world where 30 000 people die every day due to (preventable) poverty related causes? Does describing the admittedly more exacting duty to assist others dying from poverty as supererogatory not indicate the normalisation of self-obsessed individualism? After Levinas, “[r]esponsibility for the neighbour is precisely what goes beyond the legal and obliges beyond contracts; it comes to me from what is prior to my freedom, from a nonpresent, an immemorial” (BPW 142).

⁷ Rawls (TJ 167) distinguishes a “love of mankind” and a “sense of justice,” the former being driven by a greater desire “to give justice” and leads the individual to perform acts of supererogation. Sooner or later, this benevolent subject is faced with the problem of the third, that is, a division of its benevolence as well as having to decide the right courses of action. According to Rawls, the two principles of justice he has identified would steer the benevolent subject when having to decide over the dispersal of his beneficence. It also demonstrates, in Rawls’s view, “why nothing would have been gained by attributing benevolence to the parties in the original position.” To this, Levinas would argue that the benevolence of the ethical relation is already implied by beings desiring justice, a relation that ‘founds’ justice.

I am always in the presence of the third and of the other, that is, I am always in both a political as well as an ethical relation (OB 158). Another person is both the other and the third to me – “the face is both the neighbour and the face of faces, visage and visibility” (OB 160). In fact, proximity starts with the third party (OB 160). When faced by the other, I can respond ‘politically,’ seeing the other as my equal, insisting on reciprocity between us, whereby I do not owe him anything more than he owes me, or, the other can be responded to ‘ethically,’ the relation whereby I am responsible for him beyond what is required by our political equality and reciprocity. This is the ambiguity of society. We are constantly faced with the choice of how to respond. Levinas mentions this problem with reference to Cain’s answer as to Esau’s whereabouts. Cain answered, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” In a world where the third is always present, “Cain’s answer is sincere. Ethics is the only thing lacking in his answer; there is only ontology: I am I, and he is he” (EN 110). In international society, our ‘political’ reaction to the other prevails and has become increasingly justified. Still, a guilty conscience remains.

3.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have extended the critique that originated in section 2.2, where an attempt was made to show that writers in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate consistently try to preserve for the self some sphere of autonomy, outside of responsibility for others. In this chapter, Levinas’s thought was used to argue that the self is always in a relation of responsibility with the other, who represents everyone, a relation that is present even in the impersonality of justice and institutions. The irrepressibility of the ethical relation shows the privileged view of the self as demonstrably inaccurate, as well as ‘violent’ and oppressive. It also suggests that a more ethical subjectivity lies immanent. In light of the permanence and inescapability of our ethical responsibility for the other, attempts to establish some zone of indifference strikes one as attempts to justify our disregard of the other. Albeit that in the presence of the third, there is some legitimacy for being concerned with one’s own life, such self-regard is never fully legitimate, for our responsibility for the other is always unfinished.

CHAPTER 4 – JUSTICE, ORDER AND THE ETHICAL RELATION

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the second problematic aspect of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate will be considered from a Levinasian perspective. In section 2.3, an attempt was made to indicate that, despite an ethical recognition of the other at the outset of justice, which implies recognition of the other as other, what is other becomes suppressed and disregarded when the issue of global justice is approached in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. The problem lies therein that what reminds us of our unfinished responsibility for the other and of the imperfection of justice are suppressed in the generalisation of justice, leaving us unopposed by what reminds us of the imperfections of justice. It is the otherness of the other, his 'face,' what cannot be integrated into a totality, that reminds us of our infinite responsibility for him.

This is not to argue that there is no concern for the globally poor other in the writings of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. Indeed, at the outset of justice, cosmopolitans, in particular, display a considerable degree of generosity towards the poor from other countries by including them in the scope of justice, even though the poor cannot significantly reciprocate the benefit they would receive from being included. It is also not to argue that one can have justice without order, generalisation, universality, objectivity and objectification. But it is to argue that the unapologetic and unqualified suppression of (ethical) otherness, when theorising about justice betrays the privileging of an understanding of justice of which the function is to maintain and regulate order and secure each person in his autonomy, rather than viewing this function to be the realisation of our infinite responsibility towards the other. To view justice in terms of order, rather than in terms of unfinished responsibility and generosity, partially suggests why we do not consider ourselves unjust for neglecting the global poor, since disregard for the suffering of others is as it were built into the totalising imperative of the predominant approaches to justice.

In an attempt to clarify matters somewhat, below I delineate the tendency to suppress what is other when thinking about justice into a philosophical and a socio-political component (sections 4.2. and 4.3 respectively). Regarding the *philosophical* aspect, the tendency of theoretical justice to suppress otherness is related to a wider tendency that Levinas has identified in Western philosophy (4.2.1). For Levinas, the dominant tradition of Western philosophy has been one that reduces what is other to the same and encloses the other in a system of thought. Implied by this reduction of what is other to the same is an autonomous and imperial subject, unquestioning of his right to be and his freedom to categorise and represent the world and the other for his own purposes, a world in which what is other, and the ethical responsibility of the self implied thereby, is suppressed. It is in this tendency that our continued good conscience despite the suffering of the other is partly located, since that which awakens us to our guilt for neglecting the other, his otherness, is suppressed. That this disregard of the other in the aspiration to totality need not be so is suggested by the fact of the other. The other is what ultimately disrupts and resists the closure of a system of thought (e.g. of justice) (4.2.2), for the other is by definition that which cannot be reduced to a concept and be contained in a system. That the presence of the other forever hinders the final closure of all totalities, negates the final word of all (social scientific) generalisation and shows such abstractions to be ‘violent,’ do not mean the end of theorisation about justice. Rather, the presence of the third person next to the other requires a ‘theoretical attitude’ (what Levinas terms the ‘said’), to for example think about the appropriate system of justice (4.2.3). It is however imperative that the ethical relation with the other not be lost sight of, that the ‘said’ is forever disrupted and informed by the ethical ‘saying,’ something the proposed strategy of emphasizing human complexity aspires to and which is discussed in the next chapter.

Regarding the *socio-political* aspect of justice, Levinas delineates both an ethical and a political dimension of social order (‘peace’ in his terms) (4.3.1). Though both the ethical and the political are implied by (the need for) social order, political philosophy has traditionally only paid attention to order as a ‘political peace.’ In a ‘political peace,’ the approach of the other as face, and the ethical accusation implied thereby, is forestalled as the self permits a limiting of his freedom through a ‘social contract’ so as to preserve some

measure of autonomy and legitimate indifference to the other. However, in a political peace, because freedom itself has not been renounced or put in question, a clashing of freedoms still occurs. Hence, there is a need for justice as order and for the imposition of order. It is in the privileged understanding of order as 'political,' and of justice as what maintains and regulates this 'political' order, and not as what disperses our responsibility for others, that our general disregard for those who are suffering is partially located. However, the conflict between various egoisms and the need for order already implies a relation with what cannot be contained in a system, otherness, an alterity that is ethical. Herein lies the ethical element of 'peace.' Although the ethical otherness of the other draws attention to both the limit and the violence of the political order and its institutions, there remains a need for order. The continued need for an impersonal political order, despite its violation and neglect of the specific other, lies therein that there is always a third next to the other who is also an other and for whom we are also responsible. Hence, there is a need for the impersonality of justice and institutions to reach the other and to protect him from those who mean him harm (4.3.2). However, although there is an ethical motive behind the impersonal political order, there is a tendency for the ethical to be overlooked as institutions aspire to objectivity and politics comes to serve as its own justification. It is therefore necessary to forever remind the political order of the unfinished responsibility for the other and to seek a better justice for the sake of the other. For Levinas, the liberal state is the political form best suited for adapting its institutional complex so as to reduce the violence against the other in the presence of the third, since liberal justice, by definition, always questions whether its justice really is justice (4.3.3.).

4.2. Order and the theoretical

4.2.1. Thematisation in traditional philosophy

In this section, the suppression of what is (ethically) other when the issue of global justice is broached in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate is discussed. By stifling what is other we are left unchallenged by what reminds us of our individuating and infinite responsibility for the other and by the fact that justice is always imperfect and insufficient.

The suppression of otherness in justice leaves us in good conscience, despite having failed the (globally poor) other so miserably. The tendency to unapologetically and unqualifiedly smother otherness when writing about justice in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate can be situated in a preponderant tradition of Western philosophy in which what is other is reduced to the same (4.2.1). The disruptive force of the other is already implied by the inability to theorise a ‘final’ scheme of justice and by the very need for the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. The other resists and disrupts generalisation with a force that is ethical (4.2.2). So much then for locating part of the reason for our disregard of the other’s plight and the inadequacies of global ‘justice.’ To stave off objections against what might seem to be an extreme position, since we do, after all, need some form of justice, it is necessary to note that Levinas also recognises the need for theoretical justice. However, Levinas adds the caveat that the betrayal of otherness should always be reduced. It is in this context that we discuss Levinas’s distinction between the ‘saying’ and the ‘said’ (4.2.3).

Levinas describes his project as trying to put in question “the dominant conception of the received philosophy” (EN 140). What does he understand as the ‘dominant conception’ of philosophy at which he takes his aim? Levinas interprets the history of philosophy as a persistent attempt to arrive at a universal synthesis/system, whereby every object and experience is enclosed in consciousness, leaving nothing outside (EI 75). Knowledge is a rediscovery of the truth, a “return to forgotten knowledge,” and a gradual integration of such knowledge (EN 136). Philosophy does not question the realisability of its totalising march, but instead considers misunderstandings and shortfalls in knowledge as temporary obstacles on the way to “truth” (OB 29).

It is important to bear in mind that Western philosophy is more than just a theoretical disposition – egoism and totalisation also mark the way humans comport themselves in everyday life (BPW 3). For Levinas, philosophy has traditionally been a privileging of presence. The sovereign, knowing I is the site where what is other is reduced to the same, re-presented. In a philosophy untroubled by the alterity of the other, “the I of representation is the natural passage from the particular to the universal” (TI 126). Intelligibility is dependent upon an ordering of terms into a system, a totality. In this assembling, the

subject is “origin, initiative, freedom, present” (OB 78). This melting down of objects into systems of intelligibility and categories of knowing reflects the subject’s imperial freedom, suppressing and/or ignoring what is other, representing the world to himself. The synchronising activity of representation is a “return to self as much as an issuing forth from self” (EN 161).

In Levinas’s view of ‘traditional’ philosophy, the approach of the other *qua* other is negated in the primacy the same enjoys over what is other. The other is objectified, which means that he is reduced to and maintained in a concept (TI 128). What escapes thematisation and objectification is ignored or suppressed. The other receives his meaning from his equivalence to the concept, which, in turn, receives its meaning from his overall place in a system of thought. To comprehend and represent the other in a concept is to prevent, preempt and precede his disruptive force on the totality of the same (TI 124; OB 25).

However, Levinas is not dismissive of a philosophy whereby whatever disturbs the same “ends up falling back into order” only to yield an order of greater complexity (TI 55), with reason¹ assuring the coexistence and organisation of various terms into a system (OB 165). Although philosophy is the writing up of the progression whereby things are “conquered, dominated, possessed” in a history of thought (CPP 49) and its continuous integration of the other into the same prevents the approach of the other, such progressive philosophical integration remains important when Levinas introduces the distinction between the saying and the said in his later work (see 4.2.3 below). The betrayal of the uniqueness of the other in the order of the same is necessary and unavoidable, but there are qualitative differences in these betrayals – some representations being more proximate to the alterity of the other than other representations. Levinas sees it as the task of philosophy to reduce the betrayal of the uniqueness of the other in the said (OB 7, 152) and to remind us of the betrayal that has occurred (OB 44).

¹ “Reason is sought in the relationship between terms, between the one and the other showing themselves in a theme. Reason consists in ensuring the coexistence of these terms, the coherence of the one and the other despite their difference, in the unity of a theme; it ensures the agreement of different terms without breaking up the present in which the theme is held. The coexistence or accord between different terms in the unity of the theme is called a system: the one as a sign of the other, the one as renouncing its figure to trespass over to the other” (OB 165).

4.2.2. Disturbing order: The alterity of the other

In knowing, the free self dominates the world in a spontaneity unaffected by the other as other.

“In evidence, the violence of the encounter with the non-I is deadened. The commerce with exterior truth as enacted in true cognition is thus not opposed to freedom, but coincides with it. The search for truth becomes the very respiration of a free being, exposed to exterior realities that shelter, but also threaten, its freedom” (CPP 49).

Through his acts of understanding and thematisation, the free self violates and negates the other, “stripping” it of all alterity (EN 9, 180). The ‘violence’ perpetrated against the other assumes a being both graspable and eluding every grasp (TI 223). Without this duplicity in the violated being, it would merely have been an object undergoing labour (TI 223). “The *activity* of thought triumphs over all otherness” (EN 126, emphasis added). The activity behind knowledge is a grasping, an appropriation by a self that sees the world and its contents as existing for him (LR 76). What in the other exceeds my knowledge is gradually absorbed by knowledge (TI 295). In knowing, it is as though our sensibility, our vulnerability to the other as the destitute one, is anaesthetised, repressed and suspended (OB 64).

It is not only in the ‘theoretical attitude’ that the face is masked and the self left unquestioned in his right to be. Also in our complex societies is there “violence” in our interaction with other beings, where they are approached from “an indirect angle” (CPP 19). In modern societies, we take hold of a being in its absence, “in what is not properly speaking it” (CPP 19). We relate to others in terms of the concepts and roles by which we know them, that is, in terms of what they share with other people and not in terms of their individuality (CPP 19). The objectified person is understood in his relation to other elements and receives meaning from his place in a system (CPP 20). The other is hidden in the universality of the terms in which he is represented. The other with whom we interact in complex society is a being already placed in a category, whose “particularity is already clothed with a generality,” obscuring our view of him as an individual and unique (CPP

20). In society, our awakening to the other is forestalled since his primary appearance to us is in terms of a role, a concept. Very often, “the *who* is a *what*” (TI 177). When asking *who* someone is, the answer usually says *what* he is. Such an answer refers to a person’s place in a system of relations. As Levinas admits, in daily life it is impossible to interact with every person as though he were the only person in the world. There is a necessary demarcation and allocation of roles in society, in which interaction is for the most part functional and impersonal – “the cobbler makes shoes without asking his customer where he is going” (EN 21) – and identification with people occurs in line with these roles/concepts. This objectification of the other in a concept, “obscures the otherness of the other, the otherness precisely because of which the other is not an object under our control but a neighbour” (LR 244). Also in the “decency” of the social conventions of “a community of clothed beings” (LR 243), the other remains hidden. “The most delicate social relationships are carried on in the forms of propriety; they safeguard the appearances, cover over all ambiguities with a cloak of sincerity and make them mundane. What does not enter into the forms is banished from the world” (EE 40). In the state and the equality to which its citizenry aspires, the uniqueness of the other is lost sight of in the interchangeability of citizens. In a group, persons relate around a third term that mediates the exposure of proximity (EE 95). It is in reducing someone outside one’s own group to a member of some race or class that “peace with the other turns into hatred” (BPW 166).

Still, despite the apparent “irrefutable logic of things,” despite what seems legitimately logical, despite the “concepts [being] in agreement with each other,” despite the acceptability of the ‘each to his own’ of impersonal society, despite everyone fitting into some socially designated role, in the absence of outright oppression, war, violence (that is, ‘political peace’) there remains an anxiety about the suffering that has resulted from the way things work (EN 192, BPW 164). Though we can explain and understand the death and neglect of the other in the terms of science and social theory, there remains a gnawing concern for the other that defies all scientific explanation. “The fear of everyone for themselves in the mortality of everyone does not succeed in absorbing the gravity of murder committed and the scandal of indifference to the suffering of the other” (BPW 164). There remains an anxiety that I have turned away from the other, that I have disregarded

him, that he suffers under the objectivity and impersonality of institutions, that theoretical generalisations have overlooked him, that I have dominated him. There remains anxiety about the consequences of my works, all of which I could not have foreseen. The approach of the other brings my being ill at ease to a head. Fear for the death of the other does not return to anxiety over my own death (LR 84-5).

When confronted with the other as face, a unique, unassimilated being, the self finds himself in proximity to a being that ultimately cannot be reduced to and included in the categories of objective and synthesized knowledge. As face, the other signifies on his own (BPW 53). He does not derive his meaning from his place in a system of signs. The face exceeds the categories of representation, it “breaks the system,” “refuses totalisation” (EN 34, 281, BPW 53).² The other is not just another category (“species”) characterised by otherness, but “at once what disturbs order and this disturbance itself” (EN 91, LR 245). The other resists being ‘known;’ he escapes the grasp of the totalising ego. In facing the other as a face, I disregard him in his membership of a genus and regard him in his particularity (EN 7, BPW 7). The *approach* of the other is not comprehension; it is “a neighbouring with what signifies itself without revealing itself, what departs but not to dissimulate itself” (BPW 77). The alterity of the other, his persistent resistance to objectification and thematisation, awakens the subject to his domination and muddles his clear conscience. The other shames the self for the latter’s “naïve spontaneity, for [his] sovereign coincidence with [him]self in the identification of the same” (BPW 17). The other awakens the subject the oppression that resulted from his assumed sovereignty, an awakening that has been forestalled by the suppression of otherness in the same. It is the

² Awakening to the other is a point for ‘deconstructing’ the totality that had hitherto been aspired to. Derrida (2001:4) explains, “In the case of deconstruction, without being anti-systematic, is on the contrary, and nevertheless, not only a search for, but itself a consequence of, the fact that the system is impossible; it often consists, regularly or recurrently, in making appear – in each alleged system, in each self-interpretation of and by a system – a force of dislocation, a limit in the totalisation, a limit in the movement of syllogistic synthesis. Deconstruction is not a method for discovering that which resists the system; it consists rather, in remarking, in the reading and interpretation of texts, that what has made it possible for philosophers to effect a system is nothing other than a certain dysfunction or ‘disadjustment,’ a certain incapacity to close the system. Wherever I have followed this investigative approach, it has been a question of showing that the system does not work, and that this dysfunction not only interrupts the system but itself accounts for the desire for system, which draws its *élan* from this very disadjustment, or disjunction. On each occasion, the disjunction has a privileged site in that which one calls a philosophical *corpus*. Basically, deconstruction as I see it is an attempt to train the beam of analysis onto this disjoining link.”

other that puts the priority hitherto enjoyed by the same into question. Awakening to the other is a continuous “sobering up,” “a permanent revolution” (EN 87-9). To awake to the other is already to respond, to be responsible – “awakening is obligation” (EN 114).

4.2.3. The needs of politics: Representation and the saying and the said

If all representations and knowledge of the other is an act of violence and a negation of his uniqueness, what are we to do? First, may we still speak, write, represent and know? Second, can we even write about alterity, uniqueness, the face, and otherness, and claim the status for these traits that Levinas does? These words are after all part of universal language and suggest categories of their own. These are two of the problems that lie behind Levinas’s distinction between the ‘saying’ and the ‘said.’ The said is ontological language, stating what is other in the terms of the same. In the activity of the said the other is presented and made ‘visible.’ The saying is the pre-linguistic ethical relation with the other as face. In this section the ‘relationship’ between the politically necessary representational language of the said and the ethical saying that disrupts the said is considered.

Regarding the first problem above: in the presence of the third, it is necessary to know, compare and judge. To be able to perform these tasks one needs systemised thought, a hierarchy of terms, an explication of the values underlying such thought, and a pondering of consequences (the ‘said’). The inexpressible saying needs the said to concretely respond to the other. However, the violence done to the other when thought attempts to hold him in a concept has already been remarked upon; such an attempt constitutes a betrayal of the other’s uniqueness. It is the task of philosophy to reduce this betrayal on behalf of the ‘pre-original’ saying and to instil ambiguity and hesitation against the closure of the said. It is the case that the saying is “both an affirmation and a retraction of the said” (OB 44).

Regarding the second problem above, in his influential early article on Levinas’s work (before the publication of *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*), Derrida (1978) voiced the objection that Levinas writes about what cannot be universalised, thematised, and

captured by using universal, thematising, containing language; the ‘Greek’ language of philosophy.³ Particularly in *Totality and Infinity* does Levinas use the language of the philosophical tradition to (try to) kill off the language of the philosophical tradition, which Derrida (1978:89) considers a “hallucinatory murder.” This problem is compounded by the positivity of Levinas’s language in *Totality and Infinity*, where Levinas “does not give himself the right to speak... in a language resigned to its own failure” (p. 116). In *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, one subsequently witnesses a much greater linguistic self-consciousness (see Davis, 1996:69-85), as well as the introduction of the distinction between the saying and the said,⁴ in which the inadequacy of the said as expressive of the unsayable saying is insinuated.

Saying is the passive inexpressibility of proximity, responsibility, persecution, obsession, exposure, the approach of the other, the face, etc. It is the fact of our ethical relationship with the other, the fact of sociality. Saying is an expression that precedes and underlies the thematisation of the said, but is not “babbling” (BPW 121). The saying is signification, but which “cannot be assembled” (OB 27). It is ‘an-archical.’ The saying bears the trace of the other in the said, but has already retreated from the said (BPW 72). The ethical relationship cannot be captured in language for this would already mean a departure from passivity. The self cannot protest his non-responsibility, “because the disqualification of the apology is the very characteristic of persecution, so that persecution is the precise moment where the subject is reached or touched without the mediation of logos” (BPW 93). In Blanchot’s words, proximity is “innocent guilt.” But how to write about this ethical relation, a relation that cannot be captured in language, for when such an attempt is made the passivity of the ethical saying, the uniqueness of the ethical relation with the other, is betrayed? It is in this regard that Levinas *suggests* the saying as a trace in the said, insinuating its disruptive ephemerality by describing the saying as “a movement that already carries away the

³ Derrida’s criticism is widely regarded as the as the influence behind the stylistic and methodological differences between *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, as well as the greater linguistic self-consciousness detectable in the latter work. See, for example, Bergo (1999:132-147); Bernasconi and Critchley (1991:xiii); Davis (1996); and Peperzak (1993).

⁴ Levinas had already briefly used these two terms in *Totality and Infinity* (p. 260), but confined their use to the erotic.

signification it brought” (BPW 70); a “disturbance [that] disturbs order without troubling it seriously” (BPW 70); and so on.⁵

The said is a betrayal of the saying (OB 6). It betrays the saying by holding the other in a theme, a concept, a category. However, this is a very necessary betrayal – the said is needed to reach the other in concrete situations, to not go to the other with ‘empty hands.’ It is the language of science and philosophy, of law and institutions, of knowledge and representation. It is the task of philosophy to employ language to express the inexpressible, even if it amounts to an act of ‘betrayal’ (OB 7; CPP 148). However, describing the said as a *betrayal* of the ethical saying, “amounts to denouncing neither rationality nor the structure of intentional thought, nor the synchronisation of the diverse that it implies, nor the thematisation of being by synthetic thought, nor the problematic of ontology” (EN 165). As mentioned, the presence of a third who is another other next to the other requires the universality and objectification of institutions, justice, laws and political decisions. In society, there arises the need for a “theoretical attitude” to social and scientific problems (EN 103). In society, scarce resources have to be allocated, and therefore it is necessary to compare and judge as objectively as possible. What occurs in comparison is an objectification of unique persons, a comparison of the incomparable (EN 165).

Saying, the ethical relationship with the other that underpins universal thought and institutions, acts as corrective to the betrayal of the said, it tries to “unsay” the said (BPW 107), to remind us of the unique behind the objectified, the ethical relation parallel to the political relation. One can detect a hint of the saying in the said in a moment of hesitation between the said as an *imposition* of order, and the said as “a *proposition* made to a neighbour” (OB 47, emphasis added). Levinas sees it as the task of philosophy to reduce the betrayal of the saying committed in the said (BPW 107). There is potential for reducing the betrayal of the saying in the said, since the absorption of the saying in the said does not

⁵ Other examples of attempts at expressing the inexpressible include describing the saying as an entering “in so subtle a way that unless we retain it, it has already withdrawn” (BPW 70); “withdraw[ing] before entering” (BPW 70); “one diplomat mak[ing] an exorbitant proposition to another diplomat, but this proposition is put in such terms that, if one likes, nothing has been said. The audacity withdraws and is extinguished in the very words that bear and inflame it” (BPW 70); “advanc[ing] while retreating” (BPW 70); “stripping beyond all nudity” (BPW 121); and “a passivity more passive than all passivity” (BPW 121).

exhaust the saying in manifestation – but opens into even greater complexity. The betrayal of the ethical saying in the thematisation of the said can be reduced through the development of forms of the said that are more approximate to the ethical relation and the alterity of the other.

Thus far, it may have appeared as though there is a chronological order to the saying and the said. This is not so. When Levinas speaks of the saying as ‘pre-original,’ it is meant to draw attention to the ‘anarchical’ ethical relation that underpins the ‘arche’ of the said. However, we cannot return to the origin of the ethical relation (much like one cannot return to a state of nature from which society ‘developed’). The saying, responsibility for the other, does not belong to “the order of presence” (OB 10); it can only remain implicit in our social interaction. The saying is the fact of “astonishing human fraternity in which fraternity, conceived in Cain’s sober coldness, would not by itself explain the responsibility between separated beings it calls for” (OB 10).

However, I am always already in the presence of the third, that is, in a situation where the saying has been betrayed in the said. In the presence of more than one other, justice, institutions and the making of objective decisions are necessary and unavoidable. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, there is the danger that, in the striving to establish objective institutions and theories, the objective order becomes fossilised in a forgetting of the interhuman. However, the saying still requires the objectification and thematisation of the said. What are we to do? The dilemma we have to confront consists in

inquiring how to reconcile ... the ethical requirement of the face that meets me, dissimulated by its appearance, and the other as an individual and as an object. How to enter into this comparison of incomparables without alienating the faces? For beings are not compared as faces, but already as citizens, as individuals, as a multiplicity of in a genus and not as ‘uniquenesses’ (EN 205).

Further questions arise: How is a greater confrontation of the self by the other as face to be brought about? How is the other to break through the plasticity of forms that arrests his alterity? In short, how is a more ethical politics possible, and more germane to this chapter, how is a more ethical and a more ethically suggestive representation of the other to be

achieved, ethical here retaining all the Levinasian connotations of proximity, responsibility, substitution, etc?

In response to these questions, and in conclusion, it is necessary to make two distinctions. First, it is necessary to distinguish between a political order amenable to interruption by the saying and an order less so. In the next section, liberal democracy is claimed to be the political form most welcoming of ethical interruption. Secondly, one should distinguish between a said more informed by the ethical and a said less so, measured by the extent to which the rights of the other have been realised and the complexity with which other people are socially and institutionally regarded. In chapter 5, an emphasis on human complexity is proposed as a strategy whereby greater recognition and consideration of the other as other can be brought about.

4.3. Justice, order, and the institutional

4.3.1. Two types of social order

In this section (4.3) I attempt to isolate and discuss the suppression of the ethical in justice in its socio-political dimension. In terms of the research problem, the suppression of the ethical relation with the other has translated into a disregard for the extremely poor global other. Part of the reason for this disregard can be located in the predominant view of justice as being concerned with order, rather than, for instance, our responsibility for others. However, the aspiration to social order and a justice that maintains it tend to stifle our relation with the other as other, an ethical relation. The other is the point at which the whole system of justice is put in question for its neglect, oppression and violation of the unique other. Face-to-face with the other, we are all shown to be unjust, to have failed him. The concern for and the privileging of political order have subdued the ethical accusation that issues from the face of the other, superficially 'sparing' us from guilt. Below, after having extracted the ethical component in the impersonal political order (4.3.1), this section proceeds to recognise that despite the violence of justice and institutions, there remains a need for these, even though there is a propensity in the political order to suppress and forget

the ethical relation (4.3.2.). It is therefore necessary to continuously pierce the political order with reminders of our infinite responsibility for the other. In this regard, liberal democracy is discussed as the political form most amenable to ethical interruption (4.3.3.). But, it is the immanence of the ethical in social order that is considered next.

Levinas opens up the issue of the presence of the ethical relation in the social order, ('peace,' in his terms) through the following musing:

It is extremely important to know if society in the current sense of the term is the result of a limitation of the principle that men are predators of one another, or if to the contrary it results from the limitation of the principle that men are *for* one another. Does the social, with its institutions, universal forms and laws, result from limiting the consequences of the war between men, or from limiting the infinity which opens in the ethical relationship of man to man (EI 80)?⁶

The type of 'peace' (order) most common to political philosophy is of a kind that hardly recognises the ethical relation with the other, a (an originally) Hobbesian peace as it were. As the Hobbesian struggle between "allergic egoisms" becomes suspended, a "rational peace" develops, subjecting everyone to reciprocal restrictions making life alongside one other possible. One is reminded in particular of the contractarian tradition in which self-interested individuals reach an agreement on the "rational truth" that is to govern egos that have not renounced their freedom (EN 190). Such 'peace' is "calculation, mediation, and politics" (BPW 111). Institutions regulate the socially agreed upon limitation of our reciprocal responsibility and freedom so as to guarantee "everyone the tranquillity of their happiness and the freedom to possess the world" (BPW 164). Such a withdrawn and disinterested political arrangement is "the bourgeois peace of the man who is at home with himself behind closed doors, rejecting the outside that negates him" (BPW 165). Importantly, in political peace, the egoism of interested being is not denounced; order is merely a truce (BPW 111). To be for oneself remains unquestioned and legitimate as long as it falls within the bounds of impersonal justice and morality.

In 'contrast' to a political peace in which there is an equal limitation of individual freedom, responsibility and claims upon one another, Levinas also describes an ethical 'peace.' As

⁶ For different formulations of this question, see BPW 169, OB 159-161, LR 247-8, of which a striking one asks "whether the political order defines man's responsibility or merely restricts his bestiality" (LR 248)?

opposed to the confrontation with the other in which the ego tries to bend the other to his will, subjugate the other's freedom to his own purposes, and, failing that, establish a political peace that does not renounce egoistic freedom, in ethical peace the other confronts us as 'face.' In Levinas's terms, the face of the other denotes the irreducible alterity of the other, his weakness and vulnerability before me, as well as the ethical command that issues from his presence. The other is a being that cannot be reduced to my wishes, to my objectification of him – he always escapes the categories imposed on him. Despite “my domination and his slavery, I do not possess him” (BPW 9). In his weakness, I can kill the other. But “this power is quite the contrary of power” (BPW 9). At the very moment I kill the other, he, as an alterior being, has escaped me.

Sure, in killing I can attain a goal; I can kill as I hunt or slaughter animals, or as I fell trees. But when I have grasped the other in the opening of being in general, as an element of the world where I stand, where I have seen him on the horizon, I have not looked at him in the face, I have not encountered his face... To be in relation with the other face to face is to be unable to kill (BPW 9).

The face is “what resists me by its opposition and not what is opposed to me by its resistance” (CPP 19), an opposition that is “straightaway ethical” (EI 85). The other as face puts into question my egoistic freedom that had up till now tried to dominate him. But instead of annihilating the subject through a realisation of, and shame for his domination of and violence against the other, the self is reaffirmed as unique in his responsibility for the other. The other's presence as face induces my freedom to responsibility and “founds” it (TI 203). Unlike the indifference that develops in political peace where equals live alongside one another, ethical peace goes from me to the unique other, “in desire and goodness, where the I both maintains itself and exists without egoism” (TI 306, EN 194). Ethical peace is more than the mere integration of what is different into a system, a totality, but is rather the “incessant watch” over the alterity of the other, even within the objectifying ambit of political institutions (BPW 166).

So what is the answer to Levinas's 'extremely important' question above? Are we predators of each other or are we *for* each other? I shall insist that the point of Levinas's question is rather to demonstrate that peace/order stems from both relations (predatory and ethical). Evidence for this interpretation can be found in Levinas's assertion that the limitation of

violence has always required “both the hierarchy taught by Athens and the abstract and slightly anarchical ethical individualism taught by Jerusalem” (BPW 24, emphasis removed). Clearly, in general understanding and approach the former view of peace predominates – selfish peace so as to have autonomous freedom. In chapter 2, examples of such peace in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate were discussed, where the freedom of the individual is reasonably and equally curtailed, so as to preserve some freedom for the self outside responsibility for the other. Cosmopolitans were indicated to preserve the independence of the self by, for example, laying the burden of responsibility with institutions; emphasizing human equality; leaving the individual with avenues for escape from responsibility for the other by demanding only that the subject makes a ‘reasonable’ effort to realise a greater justice; and so on. Raphael (1990:113) perhaps sums up the predominance of a political peace by ‘contrasting’ justice with generosity and charity, which he regards as “going beyond” justice. By having created a zone for the self where he can consider himself justified in his disregard of the other, the possibility of the self having his ‘right to be’ put in question by the other becomes less likely. The dissipation of the individualising ethical accusation against the self shows the prevailing of a political relating to the other, suggesting that the cosmopolitans are themselves blocking the morally progressive goals they aspire to through their preservation and installation of the autonomous self.

However, and this is central to a Levinasian approach, the ethical relation with the other cannot be entirely suppressed, even when a political balance of forces obscures the ethical peace of the subject’s being-for-the-other (LR 247). As an example of the irrepressibility of the ethical relation, Levinas cites the guilty conscience of Europe at the zenith of its modernity; a history that promised “peace, freedom and well-being” based on the “light projected by a universal knowledge on the world and human society.” However,

this history does not recognise itself in its millennia of fratricidal, political, and bloody struggles, of imperialism, of human hatred and exploitation, up to our century of world wars, genocides, the Holocaust, and terrorism; of unemployment, the continuing poverty of the Third World; of the pitiless doctrines and cruelties of fascism and National Socialism, up to the supreme paradox where the defense of the human and its rights is inverted into Stalinism (BPW 163, see also EN 191).

These abominations constitute a “break in the universality of theoretical reason” (BPW 163). This ‘break’ also constitutes an “ethical moment” because there remains an anxiety about the life of the other, even though the universal law or any other law does not hold us specifically responsible. This concern for the other is an ethical moment because of its recognition that our injustice is “independent ... of any belonging to a system, irreducible to a totality and refractory to synthesis” (BPW 165).

Levinas goes even further in locating the ethical relation with the other person. He finds the ethical relation with the other even in war: “war presupposes peace, the antecedent and non-allergic presence of the other” (TI 199). Recognition of the face is presupposed in the war of conflicting egos (TI 222, also LR 247). War “is neither the hunt nor struggle with an element. The possibility, retained by the adversary, of thwarting the best-laid calculations expresses the separation, the breach of totality, across which the adversaries approach one another. The warrior runs a risk; no logistics guarantees victory” (TI 222-223). War is waged against the other. War would not result if humans were merely elements of a totality, a system in which they mutually and finally define each other, but exist in isolation from each other. Instead beings overflow and resist the concepts and forces that seek to arrange them into a system. In both war and peace there is an assumption of “beings structured otherwise than as parts of a totality” (TI 222).⁷ The strategic peace that stems from a reasoned containment of violence, presupposes disinterestedness, passivity and patience (OB 16). However, the potential for generosity suggested by “the transcendence of the antagonist” (TI 222) is soon subsumed and forgotten in the objectivity of institutions, the legitimate claiming of rights for oneself, and the living alongside one another of equal beings.

Despite the *détente* of a political peace in which the other is kept at bay and the self deems himself permitted to live indifferent to the need of the other, there remains an irreducible

⁷ For Levinas, violence against the other is already an indication of the alterity of the other, of his resistance to totalisation (TI 223). At the moment the other is killed, he has escaped my power. “To kill is not to dominate, but to annihilate” (TI 198). It is the face of the other that resists the murderous instinct. “The infinite paralyses power by its infinite resistance to murder, which, firm and insurmountable, gleams in the face of the other, in the total nudity of his defenceless eyes, in the nudity of the absolute openness of the Transcendent. There is here a relation not with a very great resistance, but something absolutely *other*: the resistance of what has no resistance – the ethical resistance” (TI 199, emphasis in original).

interpersonal relation with the other, and therefore with all other people. The face of the other is a point in the universe where the tranquillity, impersonality and indifference of the political order and all attempts to establish and maintain this order, are put in question. But, since there is always a third person next to the other who also regards me as other, there is a need for the impersonality of politics, institutions and justice.

4.3.2. Justice, order and institutions

Despite the ‘violence’ institutions perpetrate against the other, Levinas should not be taken as dismissing the need for institutions, justice and theoretical knowledge, quite the contrary.⁸ Whilst remembering the self’s ‘pre-original’ ethical responsibility, the need for justice lies in the presence of the third next to the other. The third represents the whole of humanity with which the self stands in a relation of infinite responsibility (TI 213). “The I is in relationship with human totality” (EN 22-23). “If I am alone with the other, I owe him everything; but there is someone else” (EI 90). There is always someone else. The third is “wounded” by my “amorous dialogue” with the other in the secrecy of our interpersonal relation, which the third regards as “wrong” in its exclusion of him. The intimacy of such a “society of love” is “a pious intention oblivious to real evil” (EN 20-21). So, the presence of the third signifies the limitation of responsibility for the specific other so as to respond to multiple others that also command my ethical response (EN 105). In order to be just, one is to limit one’s responsibility to the specific other and disperse it to all others.

How am I to limit my responsibility for the other? Who should I respond to? Whose side should I be on? How do I know who is right and who is wrong? What has happened between two others? What have they done to each other (EN 166)? How are we to implement decisions? And so on. In a plurality, it becomes necessary to know, compare and

⁸ For Levinas, the ethical relation is more fundamental than justice and institutions, and the systemisation and objectification these entail, a priority he asserts in *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, “The conjuncture in which a man is responsible for other men, the ethical relationship, which is habitually considered as belonging to a derivative or founded order, has been throughout this work approached as irreducible. It is structured as the one-for-the-other. It signifies outside of all finality and every system, where finality is but one of the principles of systematisation possible. This responsibility appears as a plot without a beginning, anarchic” (OB 135).

judge. And there is a need for institutions, which have limited capabilities, to concretely disperse our responsibility for the multitude, in mindfulness of the 'pre-original' ethical relationship. Justice is needed to decide who is guilty and who is innocent. It is necessary to 'know.' After all, as Levinas infamously remarked, "There are people who are wrong" (LR 294).⁹ The imperative to 'know' includes the need for theoretical reflection (EN 104). But, despite insisting that "[i]n order to be just it is necessary to know" (EN 204), Levinas does not provide us with principles according which to judge. It is in this absence that the significance of the theorisation of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate lies, a debate in which writers try to establish the appropriate relation between the other and the third (and also the self) and thereby provide us with principles according which to judge and make decisions.

It is important to note that in the presence of the third the self is granted equality with the other and the third. My equality stems from the fact that in the presence of the third "I am approached as an other by the others" (OB 158), but also because the presence of numerous others to whom the self is responsible requires an equal limitation and division of the subject's responsibility among multiple others. Institutions are required to regulate the distribution of responsibilities, to determine the substance of equality. In the equality of citizens in a polis, there is "justice even for me" (EI 99). In the political order, the subject may ask the other for an accounting and insist upon respect for his rights and interests against those of the other. A strong conception of rights (e.g. that of Nozick, 1974) reminds one of the vehemence with which it is possible to resist the other's claim in the ambiguous social relationship and thereby to try to justify the one's usurpation of the other's place.

While it is true that, in the presence of the third, the Levinasian self is salvaged and he 'borrows' time to be for himself, the burden of responsibility for the other inescapably weighs on one. In society the self is pulled in two directions. On the one hand, there is the reminder that the idea of equality "cannot be detached from the welcoming of the face, of which it is a moment" (TI 214), which is why Levinas sees the origin of "morality" as not

⁹ Levinas made this remark during a radio interview on the topic of the massacring of Palestinian refugees by Christian soldiers with the complicity of the Israel Defence Forces at the Chatilla and Sabra refugee camps in Lebanon in 1982. See also section 1.4 above.

lying in equality, but in substitution for the other, “in the fact that infinite exigencies, that of serving the poor, the stranger, the widow, and the orphan, converge at one point of the universe” (TI 245). However, and on the other hand, in the presence of the third, there “is an incessant correction of the asymmetry of proximity in which the face is looked at” (OB 158). So, the self is simultaneously in a double relation with every other, in both a political and an ethical relation, the ‘ambiguity of society.’ In society it is necessary to make a choice – do I treat the other politically, that is, insisting on my rights against his, referring him to institutions for his needs, accept responsibility only so far as the law determines, etc.; or, do I relate to the other ethically, that is, accepting my infinite responsibility towards him, accepting that there is “a surplus of my duties over my rights” (EN 60), recognising that I can see sufferings of the other that institutions cannot (BPW 23). So, when Levinas writes that “justice remains justice only, in a society where there is no distinction between those close and those far-off, but in which there also remains the impossibility of passing by the closest” (OB 159), he is drawing attention to the double relation in which we stand with other people; we relate to the other at an impersonal, political level, as well as at a concrete, interpersonal ethical level. In the quoted remark above, Levinas is further expressing a concern that in the formalism and formulaic nature of objective justice there is the tendency to overlook the ‘human.’ According to an equal division of our responsibility for one another in the presence of the third, I do not owe someone more than what is required by law, convention or morality when I merely regard him as one of a multitude. However, when I regard him as an other, I owe that person my infinite responsibility.

To clarify somewhat, consider Rorty and Levinas on the matter of not responding to the other in the presence of the third. To create some space for the self away from responsibility for others, Rorty draws a sharp distinction between the public and the private spheres. Rorty reaches a moment of in/decision – for him there is no indication when private (for oneself) or public (for the other) concerns should prevail. Similarly, for Levinas, there is some justification for (temporarily) not acting for the other – this is one of the meanings of equality. Is the self to relate to the other politically or ethically? Not acting for the other can be further legitimised through appeals to spurious, though legitimate

principles (see MacIntyre, 1981:6-21). Furthermore, in both Rorty and Levinas, there is not only an unease about having abandoned the other; there is also a bad conscience about the effects of the autonomous self's exercise of freedom, about "the tendencies to cruelty inherent in searches for autonomy" (CIS 144). However, the difference between these two writers is that Levinas is less willing to accept the equal legitimacy of choosing either way, despite recognising a certain legitimacy of private concerns in the political order of the said. The infinity of the self's responsibility for the other, the permanence of his sentience for the suffering of the other, always leaves the subject ill at ease about not tending to the other. The relative ease with which Rorty turns away from the other towards private concerns, despite his credentials as a thinker deeply concerned about the suffering of others, already points to the precarity of the ethical.

In the presence of the third, it is necessary that our responsibility for the other be realised through institutions. Indeed, part of the *raison d'être* of institutions is to concretely attend to the needs of others that are beyond the reach of the self. Part of the ongoing history of progressive politics, that is, politics more imbued with an ethical concern for the other, has been a striving to eliminate arbitrary discrimination by the institutions of the state, that is, to treat like cases alike. However, another aspect of institutional progress has been for institutions to become more sensitive to difference, to make finer distinctions in the way people are treated, reflecting a realisation that justice sometimes requires people to be treated differently. Be that as it may, institutions, as the implementers of justice, objectify the unique persons over whom they stand, regardless of institutional complexity and sensitivity.

Problematically, it is characteristic of institutions to aspire to universality and objectivity and thereby 'violate' the other through their objectifying treatment of him and to fail in meeting the other's infinite need. Furthermore, through the objectifying gaze of institutions and the application of impersonal law, there occurs a general suppression of the humanity, the uniqueness, of the self and the other. Despite Levinas's view that the interpersonal ethical relation enables the impersonality of justice, and that there is a need for the ethical relation to move to the impersonal order of justice, the interpersonal tends to become

anaesthetised in the order of justice. In the political order, the self and the other are equal to all others. Under the gaze of institutions, the self and other are regarded as equivalent to the concept, which in turn receives its meaning from its place in the system of justice. Such a loss of singularity runs counter to the ethical individuation required for carrying out one's responsibility for the other. Recognition and assumption of responsibility for the other requires the self to view himself as individual, unique, 'elected,' outside of what he has in common with other people. Similarly, the uniqueness of the other is absorbed in the impersonal political order. So, despite the good intentions that may go into seeking and establishing justice, "politics left to itself bears a tyranny within itself; it deforms the I and the other who have given rise to it, for it judges them according to universal rules, and thus as in absentia" (TI 300). In fact, the interpersonal relation is, by definition, that which cannot be perfected through the state. For Levinas, "the negative element, the element of violence in the state, in the hierarchy, appears when the hierarchy functions perfectly, when everyone submits to universal ideas. There are cruelties because they proceed from the necessity of the reasonable Order. There are, if you like, the tears that a civil servant cannot see: the tears of the other" (BPW 23).

To try to remedy the inevitable political disregard of the otherness of the other, "it is necessary to defend subjectivity... because the I alone can perceive the 'secret tears' of the other" (BPW 23). Individualism is important not for its own sake, but for the sake of the other. It will be claimed below that liberal democracy is the political form best suited to such individuation, and is most permissive and enabling of processes that (aspire to) expose us to what suggests the otherness of the other.

4.3.3. The ethical potential of the liberal state

The unpreventable violence of justice and the state against the other has been noted. Faced with the 'determinism of politics,' the ethical is always under threat. "The interhuman"¹⁰

¹⁰ "The interhuman, properly speaking, lies in a non-indifference of one to another, in a responsibility of one for another, but before the reciprocity of this responsibility, which will be inscribed in impersonal laws, comes to be superimposed on the pure altruism of this responsibility inscribed in the ethical position of the I

perspective can persist, but can also be lost, in the political order of the City where the Law establishes mutual obligations between citizens” (EN 100). Even in a perfectly just system is there a violation of the other. In his responsibility for the other it is the task of the self to draw attention to and try to correct the inevitable institutional violence against the other. For the autonomous subject, protected in his autonomy by the state, to awaken to his injustice “a new situation is required: someone must ask [the subject] for an accounting” (EN 30), which is to say that the subject should be confronted by the other as face. Moral progress, that is, greater and more intense concern about a greater diversity and a greater number of people, requires a return to the “foundational inter-humanity” (EN 165).

In a politics more aware of the ethical, there would be an intense and constant ‘vibration’ between the ethical and the political, between being for the other and being for oneself, between guilt before the other and insisting upon one’s rights against the other, an ambivalence, an acknowledgement of ambiguity and complexity, hesitation before every decision.¹¹ Increased ethical awareness would require, firstly, the noticing of the other outside of the categories in which he is usually understood and contained, a situation more suggestive of the other’s uniqueness, his face; and secondly, the self would also be prone to consider himself guilty for having usurped the place of the other, being more willing to question his own right to be. Both of these elements suggest a greater recognition of the ethical relation with the other, and which will hopefully lead to tangible advances. These two aspects of a more ethically aware politics mutually influence each other, but there are many factors that run counter to their coming about.

Though one cannot be certain that a greater recognition of the ethical relation with the other will concretise in a more ethical political order, what Levinas does seem quite certain of is that the liberal state is the political form best suited to a pursuit of moral progress. In the

qua I. It is prior to any contract that would specify precisely the moment of reciprocity – a point at which altruism and disinterestedness may, to be sure, continue, but at which they may also diminish or die out” (EN 100).

¹¹ For a corresponding, Levinas-inspired view, see Critchley (2004: 182-183), who argues for “an anarchic disturbance of politics. This is the anarchy of the relation of proximity and substitution with the other.” Critchley concludes that “[i]f we are not to resign ourselves to the finally defeatist position... that politics is rare, ...if we are going to face and face down the political horror of the present, and Levinas’s work has always been dominated by that horror, then I think politics has to be empowered by a metapolitical moment of disturbance, an anarchic ethical injunction and the experience of an infinite ethical demand.”

ensuing discussion, Rorty's view of the liberal state is used to echo, supplement and provide a contrast with Levinas's view thereof. One is struck by their similar view of the liberal state as a political form in continuous search for a better justice, as well as it being the form of state most accommodating to such a pursuit. Consider their exact words: For Levinas, in the liberal state "justice is always a revision of justice and the expectation of a better justice" (EN 196), "always concerned about its delay in meeting the requirement of the face of the other" (EN 203). Rorty, though still reflecting a view of moral concern as based on solidarity, sees a virtue of liberal society as trying to shake off the "curse" of its inevitable "ethnocentrism" (CIS 198); "ethnocentrism" referring to the privileging of certain social categories, practices, relationships and discourses that might have the effect of suppressing the otherness of certain persons and obscuring their vulnerability, suffering and oppression. Such blindness to the other is reduced in the liberal state where the citizenry "prides itself on constantly adding on more windows, constantly enlarging its sympathies" (ORT 204). It appears as though Rorty and Levinas's "sentient disposition towards the other's suffering" (Critchley, 1996:33), inspires their offbeat characterisation and endorsement of the liberal state.¹²

It is the freedoms people enjoy in liberal societies, relative to other political forms, as well as the built-in responsiveness of democratic government, that make liberal democracies so well suited to be deeply concerned with the other (as other). Irony, which Rorty only sees as private, enables the public association with, and concern for (strange) other, oppressed people. Although some citizens might deem concern for strange other people as unpatriotic or offensive, in liberal societies tolerance of plurality and social association is a public virtue and is judicially enforced. Furthermore, the material security of people in liberal

¹² It is interesting to note that one finds a similar assessment of democracy as the political form best suited to permit otherness in the (Foucauldian) writings of William Connolly (1987; 1991). In a democracy the imperatives of common goals and respect for individual freedom stand in an irresolvable tension, although political institutions 'discipline' society in order to make the pursuit of common goals possible. Connolly desires an emphasis on "the persistent ambiguity between the democratic appreciation of individuality and its drive to extend popular control over common areas of life... By enabling [democratic governance's] own ambiguity to become more overt it encourages us to be wary of doctrines that glorify normalisation by defining it as harmonisation; it encourages us to treat normalisation as an ambiguous good to be qualified, countered, and politicised" (Connolly, 1987:16). In this study, a strategy of emphasizing human complexity is able and intended to disrupt stable perceptions of others and bring to light the oppression that accompanies 'normality.'

societies makes group loyalty largely irrelevant to securing the means of survival (TP 180). It is the breathing space proffered freedom in liberal societies that enables the exposure of injustice, oppression and suffering. Apart from liberal societies being an environment conducive to asking for a reckoning in the name of the other, other liberal features such as freedom of expression, liberal education, government support for the arts, and so forth, assist in and encourage the creation of more nuanced images of the other (and the self), representations more approximate to the uniqueness of the other, as well as making the subject aware of ways in which he has personally oppressed or disregarded the other. Liberal societies, by definition, welcome the constant struggle on behalf of oppressed otherness, making “life easier for poets and revolutionaries” (CIS 60).

Despite the aforementioned heady humanism of the liberal state, the need for the state to objectify and categorise unique persons remains necessary and unavoidable, given the exigencies of governing a complex society, but also given the importance of the principle of equality. A large part of the historical struggle for equality has been for the equality of all citizens before the law. Though there has been a progressive trend to make ever finer and more sensitive distinctions in order to take account of social diversity, when it comes to applying the law, liberal societies treat like case alike. This translates into, for example, a similar categorisation of persons according to their crimes and a concomitant marginalisation of their uniqueness, of sentimental stories that might evoke pity. In a society based on “procedural justice” “guardians of universality” are not to pay too much attention to what is other about the criminal. “For if we had watched the war criminal grow up, had travelled the road he had travelled, we might have had difficulty reconciling the demands of love and of justice. But it is well for society that in most cases our ignorance permits us to avoid this dilemma. Most of the time, justice has to be enough” (ORT 205-206). Here, Rorty is emphasizing the importance of equality and objectivity, though he leaves a backdoor for taking into account the uniqueness of a person, the ‘road he had travelled’. Without leaving such a backdoor (“*most of the time*, justice has to be enough”) Rorty would have undermined and contradicted his view of liberal society as constantly asking whether and how it has been cruel and oppressive, by, for example, listening to a “long, sad, sentimental story” (TP 184).

Though the other always takes precedence over the self in the one-to-one ethical relation, in the political relation, that is, in the presence of more than one other, there is a need for justice and judgement. In the terms of *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, where the distinction between the saying and the said plays an important role, the ethical saying needs the language, institutions, knowledge and written texts of the said to regulate responsibility for the other, to decide who is guilty, to prescribe what to do. However, the liberal state is always aware of its violation of the other and mindful of the ethical relation with the other, “a state questioning itself” (EN 205), and as such “legislation [is] always unfinished, always resumed, a legislation open to the better. It attests to an ethical excellence and its origin in kindness from which, however, it is distanced... by the necessary calculations imposed by a multiple sociality, calculations constantly starting over again” (EN 229-230).

As with Rorty, Levinas recognises the (inevitable) suppression of otherness in justice, the “bad conscience of justice” (EN 230) (forgetting ‘the road the other has travelled,’ in Rorty’s terms), whilst also strongly associating the imperative to somehow let sensitivity to otherness seep into the system of justice with the liberal state. If one were to identify a difference between Rorty and Levinas on the issue of justice in the liberal state, it would be that there is a greater willingness on the side of Rorty to accept the static objectivity of justice. For Levinas, “justice *always* [has] to be perfected against its own harshness (EN 229, emphasis added). By contrast, consider Rorty’s explanation that moral duties in a liberal democracy are divided between “agents of love” and “agents of justice.” Agents of love draw attention to people who have not been considered as equals in the workings of justice and proceed to show why these people should be included as equals. On the other hand, agents of justice, or “guardians of universality, make sure that *once* these people are admitted as citizens, *once* they have been shepherded into the light by the connoisseurs of diversity, *they are treated just all like the rest of us*” (ORT 206, emphasis added).¹³

¹³ What one finds here, albeit implicitly, is Rorty reverting to his view that solidarity is the basis for moral concern, that once strange people have been shown to be like us, they may join us as equals. One of the problems with solidarity, and by the same token, equality, is that it covers over the face of the other and the election of the responsible self, as both the self and the other become interchangeable with other units in the system.

Despite the attention that has been paid to the affinities between the social thought of these two writers throughout this article, and despite the concern of both for the suffering of other people, we have been led to a point of divergence between Rorty and Levinas, which turns on their disagreement over the legitimacy of a turn away from concern and responsibility for the other. For Rorty, concern with the suffering and oppression of the other may end when the other is granted rights equal to his or her former oppressors. Furthermore, for Rorty, the self may consider himself justified in being concerned with his own private quests for self-creation, even in the face of the suffering of others. In Levinas's view, the equality of the other before the institutions of the state is not enough, for, in equality, there is an unavoidable element of violence against the other, a violence that "appears even when the hierarchy functions perfectly" (BPW 23). So, it remains incumbent upon the self to see the "the tears [of the other] that a bureaucrat cannot see" (BPW 23). Further, the infinite responsibilities of the Levinasian subject cannot accept the 'equal validity' of the liberal split between the public and the private. So, when Rorty thinks that pretty much all we need for moral progress to occur is for there to be more liberals, Levinas disagrees through a rhetorical question asked seventy years ago, "We must ask ourselves if liberalism is all we need to achieve an authentic dignity for the human subject" (RH 63)?

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter an attempt was made to extend a critique that originated in section 2.3, where a tendency of writers in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate to suppress otherness when approaching the issue of justice was identified. The suppression of justice has been argued to be problematic for leaving us in a good conscience despite the fact that justice is always imperfect and that we have always failed in our responsibility towards the other, especially insofar as he is the globally poor other. Having dissected the suppression of otherness in justice into its philosophical and socio-political dimensions, (ethical) otherness was claimed to lie immanent, suggesting the potential for a stronger ethical response to the global other.

Both sections 4.2 and 4.3 ended with an assertion of the importance for order to be interrupted by reminders of an unfinished responsibility for the other. In chapter 5, it will be suggested that an emphasis on human complexity can function as an insinuation of the saying in the said and can steer us towards a better (global) justice.

CHAPTER 5 – POLITICAL ACTION AND THE COMPLEXITY OF THE OTHER

5.1. Introduction

This study has been concerned with the question of why people do not consider themselves guiltier with regard to their neglect of the global poor, particularly in light of the Levinasian premise that the self stands in an ethical relation with every human being, who is an other to him. In section 2.2 and in chapter 3 it was argued that the predominant and privileged view of the self in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate is of the individual as autonomously free, which indicates a ‘political’ relating to the other, rather than an ‘ethical’ posture towards him. In section 2.3 and chapter 4 it was argued that, in the search for universal theories and organising principles of justice, what is other has been suppressed, thereby leaving the (autonomous) self undisturbed by what reminds him of his unfinished responsibility for the global other and hence in good conscience despite the suffering of the other.

In this chapter, the focus is on a third way in which the ethical relation with the extremely poor global other has been suppressed. A third reason for our indifference to the extremely poor global other can be located in the cosmopolitan strategy of emphasizing human equality, the effect of which is to suppress that which awakens us to our responsibility for the other, namely his uniqueness. In light of this criticism, a Levinasian ‘strategy’ is suggested, whereby human complexity¹ is emphasized instead.² Such a ‘strategy’ has the

¹ I understand human ‘complexity’ as synonymous with human ‘multifacetedness’ and do not intend any association with, for example, complexity theory or the study of systems.

² With regard to the ‘strategy’ that is to be sketched, it should be noted that some of Rorty’s ideas, although not explicitly referred to, form a background against which the strategy can be understood. It is however necessary to leave Rorty in the background, for his thought brings with it the problematic view of moral concern as based on solidarity, a problem that is addressed in the rest of this footnote. It is useful to start with Rorty’s own opposition to emphasizing human equality so as to elicit moral concern. To say we should be concerned with someone’s plight because that person is a human being and therefore deserving of it is, for Rorty the pragmatist philosopher, not a particularly convincing reason. Rather, moral concern is based on solidarity, loyalty to a group, and therefore exclusive and contrastive, so that pointing out that someone should be helped because he is a human being is “a weak, unconvincing explanation of a generous action.” A stronger motivation for helping someone would be because he is ‘one of us,’ where ‘us’ necessarily contrasts with some ‘they’ (CIS 191).

Solidarity with certain groups, and therefore not with many other groups, is the consequence of having been born into a certain society and context of moral and social relations. But Rorty recognises that the

dual benefit of first, reminding us of the ways in which we have been naively unjust, by pointing out aspects of human life that we have been paying insufficient attention to, thereby directing us towards the type of things a more just order would try to correct; and second, being more suggestive of the uniqueness of the other, which is what awakens us to our responsibility for him.

5.2. The problem with emphasizing human equality

Cosmopolitan political theorists, almost by definition, are deeply concerned about the suffering of the extremely poor global other, a situation they often seek to address in their writings where they try to convince us, first, that the current global distributional order is

contingency of our solidarity with certain groups can lead to an equally contingent disregard of those who are not part of our group. It is therefore necessary to continually extend our “our sense of ‘we’ to people we have previously thought of as ‘they’” (CIS 192). Having extended our solidarity to different groups of people, we are to persist in asking if “what we have recently gained in solidarity cost us our ability to listen to outsiders who are suffering” (ORT 13)? It is further necessary to fight off the tendency to narrow one’s circles of concern and loyalty when times are tough, when one’s ‘survival’ becomes dependent on which group one belongs to (JLL 45, TP 180). Rorty inscribes liberal societies with such a perpetual questioning of its own solidarities. Liberal societies, by definition, pride themselves on their tolerance for plurality and for their continuous attempts at trying to shake off the “curse” of ethnocentrism, that is, the inevitable initial myopia of having to “start from where we are,” through a commitment to create an ever larger and more pluralistic society (CIS 198).

As mentioned, moral concern for others is based on viewing strange people as similar to us. But, how do we arrive at seeing others as similar to us, especially since Rorty denies the possibility of reaching into the ether for an image of the essential man, for a universal similarity we should all aspire to (CIS 94; ORT 167-185)? Rorty’s answer is that solidarity/moral concern “is not discovered by reflection but created...by the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers” (CIS xvi). Our inability to see people as such translates into a continued disregard or oppression of them, since they are not really ‘human’ in our eyes. It is through a piecemeal process of ‘sentimental education’ that our ‘imaginative abilities’ are expanded and realigned. Sentimental education is the creation of moral concern and consideration through activities such as description and redescription; the drawing of attention to previously unnoticed or cruelty, suffering and oppression; the new articulation of familiar situations in ways that now elicit emotional reactions where old articulations did not; familiarising people with different and strange other people; the telling of sentimental stories; helping others find the words to articulate their lives in their own terms; etc.

However, and here lies my concern, one needs to think of the people we come to see as like ourselves and subsequently included into our ‘we.’ Are our imaginations not usually opened to groups and persons we are already somewhat aware of, more rounded characters that already have some power of self-expression, of forcing us to listen, of creating footholds from whence our public imaginations and policies can be expanded? To generalise, Americans are most likely to see other Westerners as being like them, an (unfortunate) affirmation of Huntington’s (1998) assessment. But this leaves the problem of concern for those beyond our national borders who are threatened by extreme poverty largely unaltered: relatively well-off Americans continue to consider themselves closest to those who need their help the least. We are left with a situation in which the weakest and most marginal are also least able to gain our understanding, a ‘foothold’ in our imaginations, a problem ‘solidarity’ seems unlikely to solve.

unjust, and second, that we ought therefore to rectify this injustice. I agree. The problem appears when considering the strategy cosmopolitans employ to (try to) convince us that we ought to rectify global distributive injustice, for their strategy struggles to activate an acknowledgement and acceptance of one's *personal* responsibility for the other.

In order to convince us of our responsibility for the global other, cosmopolitans stress our fundamental human equality as a reason for having to treat the global other better.³ Cosmopolitans argue that if we *theoretically* consider all people as equal in some relatively substantial sense, that is, substantial enough to give their interests due consideration in say, a global original position, then the global distribution of wealth would be shown to be unjust and we would therefore have to treat the global poor better/with more consideration.⁴ If one grants the premise that humans are substantially equal, then the conclusion that humans ought to be treated so will fall into place. However, as we can see, a gap has opened up between considering the poor as substantially equal in a theoretical exercise, and treating the poor as substantially equal in reality, for the fact that thousands die daily from preventable, poverty related causes indicate that we do not show them much consideration in actuality.⁵

In order to narrow the gap between the theoretical regard of the poor as substantially equal to us and our disregard of them in reality, cosmopolitans can be understood as setting the issue within two frameworks of distributive justice, 'justice as mutual advantage' and 'justice as impartiality,' (presuming that people want to behave justly) (see section 2.4).

³ On the cosmopolitan consideration of each person as being of equal moral concern, see Beitz (1994:124-125).

⁴ Pogge (1989:240-259) argues that whether we imagine persons in a global original position as representatives of states, members of states, or first and foremost members of a global society, global distributive justice would be a much more salient issue and "the social position of the globally least advantaged [will become the] touchstone for assessing our basic institutions" (p. 242).

⁵ For Rorty, to say that members of a group are oppressed or neglected (i.e. not treated with equal consideration) is to say that the rest of us do not view them as "full-fledged" (TP 219). Rorty claims that pragmatists like him see "personhood as a matter of degree, not as an all-or-nothing affair" (TP 219), which does not mean that the poor/women/blacks fit naturally into this category, but merely that the articulations of who they are and what it is like to be them are still undesiredly dependent on and obstructed by the language of the dominant binary (the rich/men/whites) in which the oppressed find themselves. For a group to be considered full-fledged "in a given society is a matter of double negation: it is *not* to think of oneself as belonging to a group that powerful people in that society thank God they do *not* belong to" (TP 224, emphasis in original; see TP 202-227).

'Justice as mutual advantage' means that those persons who participate in a scheme of social cooperation should be rewarded according to their contribution. It is for this reason that cosmopolitans stress the level of global economic integration so as to portray the world as participating in such a joint venture for social gain. However, this approach to justice is limited because the poorest of the poor are also the most 'superfluous' to the global economy, since their participation in it is marginal at most and they are therefore least likely to be permitted into a sharing of the spoils. 'Justice as mutual advantage' therefore leaves those cosmopolitans are most concerned about, the extremely poor, out of the ambit of justice. This limitation of 'justice as mutual advantage' leads cosmopolitans to resort to a view of 'justice as impartiality,' whereby the views and interests of all those *affected* by practices and institutions in the global political economy are given equal consideration, rather than restricting justice to all those who have *contributed* to the global product. This move by cosmopolitans makes the scope of justice universal, since global institutions in some way or other affect everyone. However, reverting to justice as impartiality, as we can see, leads us back to the original problem in the 'real world' where people do not treat one other with equal consideration.

The option cosmopolitans take at this point is to emphasize that we are indeed all equal, although this cannot be 'proved.' By rhetorically stressing the equality of the global poor to us, cosmopolitans are hoping to convince us that the global poor should be treated with greater regard, which would presumably translate into a greater alleviation of their plight. Since the more considerate treatment of these non-fellow citizens, especially with regard to global distributive justice, is highly unlikely to be institutionally enforced or the benefit of their inclusion reciprocated, such increased consideration constitutes a gratuitous treatment of the other, an 'ethical' response to him.

By terming the gratuitously more considerate treatment of the poor global other 'ethical,' with all its Levinasian connotations, we begin to see deeper into the problematic character of the cosmopolitan strategy of emphasizing human equality. The non-reciprocal ethical treatment of the other implies the recognition of the other as 'face,' as absolutely different from everyone else, a uniqueness that is ethical. The 'face' of the other exposes me to his

vulnerability, my domination and neglect of him, thereby putting me to shame and summoning me to an infinite and asymmetrical responsibility for him. However, the constant emphasis on human equality goes in the opposite direction for it *masks* the uniqueness of the other, obscuring that which reminds me of my infinite and asymmetrical responsibility for him and thereby undermining that which cosmopolitans desire, namely the gratuitous better treatment of outsiders. Even the guilt that stems from the ethical accusation established through a *theoretical* consideration of the other as equal is dissipated, as the other is constantly rendered ‘faceless’ by this cosmopolitan strategy.⁶

The cosmopolitan emphasis on human equality as that which is supposed to steer us towards a more humane world, is, in Levinas’s view, the very opposite, “a levelling of the idea of fraternity” (EE 95-96). “That all men are brothers is not explained by their resemblance” (TI 213-4), but by the their irreducible difference, but which is not indifference. ‘Fraternity’ is the simultaneity of being in an ethical and a political relation with the other.⁷ This duality informs my relation with every person, who is both a specific other to whom I owe everything, and a general other who is my equal. An emphasis on equality negates the interpersonal ethical relation and renders the subject indifferent to the other.

In response to the research question of this study, I have argued above that a third reason for why we are left indifferent to the suffering of the extremely poor global other is partly due to a strategy cosmopolitans employ, the intention of which is to evoke greater concern

⁶ Rendering the self as equal to the other clashes with the asymmetry of the ethical relation by implying an ultimate reciprocity between self and other. Equality establishes for the self a sphere in which he may be complacently auto-nomous, undisturbed by the fact that his very act of existence is ‘murderous and usurpatory.’ An emphasis on equality further dissipates the individuating ethical accusation against the self in the ethical relationship with the other, the self’s ‘election’ as uniquely responsible. Since my awakening as uniquely responsible for the other is ‘preceded’ and implied by proximity to the other as face (the other as ‘activating’ element in the interpersonal relation), in this chapter, I only pay attention to the negation of the uniqueness of the *other* and not to the negation of the self’s individuating election as responsible.

⁷ Levinas explains, “Fraternity is radically opposed to the conception of a humanity united by resemblance... Human fraternity has then two aspects: it involves individualities whose logical status is not reducible to the status of ultimate differences in a genus, for their singularity consists in each referring to itself... On the other hand, it involves the commonness of a father, as though the commonness of race would not bring together enough... Monotheism signifies this human kinship, this idea of a human race that refers back to the approach of the other in the face, in a dimension of height, in responsibility for oneself and for the other” (TI 214); see also Critchley (1992:227).

for the poor global other, but which in fact contributes to our indifference. In light of my criticism of the cosmopolitan strategy, whereby cosmopolitans emphasize human equality in order to bring about moral progress in international relations, it is necessary to make a few, somewhat more practical suggestions that bear the potential for eliciting more concern for and consideration of the world's poorest people. This is what I seek to do in the next section. Although the 'strategy' that is proposed is rather bare, it will at least attempt to give somewhat more practical content to the Levinasian idea that the political is to be held in check and informed by the interpersonal relation with the other. These more practical suggestions are also intended to convey the view that there is an alternative/supplement to what cosmopolitans propose and that I have therefore not criticised a strategy that is necessarily the best we could do.

5.3. A 'Levinasian strategy': Emphasizing human complexity

In contrast to a cosmopolitan approach that emphasizes human equality, and insofar as our aim is to elicit greater concern for the global poor, I propose that we pursue a 'strategy' that emphasizes, describes and draws attention to human complexity. But before considering this somewhat more practical suggestion in greater length and setting it in a Levinasian context, there are three preliminary issues that I would like to address with regard to political action for the sake of the other. These concern the (i) subject himself, (ii) political action for the sake of the other, and (iii) what is understood by a 'better justice.' After discussing these three matters, I return to a discussion of the politically strategic emphasis on human equality.

(i) The possibility for ethical action in the realm of the political is located in the subject. As Levinas reminds us, in order to defend the other, it is necessary to defend subjectivity (BPW 23). In this study, the prevailing form of the political self, as reflected by the writings in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, has been depicted as having by and large disregarded his ethical responsibility for the other and has insisted upon his own autonomy and interests at the expense of the other. In spite of such a negative assessment of

the cosmopolitan and communitarian self, there remains the possibility for him to be good, to act for the other. Indeed, without the temptation and possibility of selfishness, one would not have been able to speak of goodness and generosity. The practical problem that is to be confronted is how to increase the likelihood of ethical concern and goodness towards the other.

The self is always in a relation with the other who is at the same time a unique person and a member of a genus, equal and similar to everyone else; the situation of “fraternity” (TI 214). That I am always in a relation with the other as other, that is, that there is always an ethical element to my relation with another person, means that I am always responsible for other people, responsible “for those [I] do not even know” (BPW 81). To be a self means to have been singled out as inescapably responsible, the point upon which “[a]ll the suffering and failure of the world weighs” (BPW 94). To be responsible means that I must assume everyone’s burden without anyone being able to relieve me of mine. This is not to cram the subject into the ‘category of the unique’ (which would be a contradiction in terms). Rather, the election of the self as responsible for the other “is to restore to the soul its egoity, which supports no generalisation” (OB 127).

Already in *Existence and Existents* did Levinas inscribe the self with the ability to arise, the capacity to act without the action having had any preceding cause. Although our world is replete with complacency towards and neglect of the other, in the self resides the possibility to act, to act for the sake of the other, regardless of the extent of the oppression that confronts him, regardless of the height of the odds stacked against him. It is always possible to be for-the-other; in this regard, the subject is *free*.⁸ Levinas celebrates this capacity of the self to act, even when his influence is likely to be negligible, when, with reference to the Nazi period, he wrote that “[t]o act for remote things at the moment in which Hitlerism triumphed, in the deaf hours of this night without hours – independently of

⁸ During an interview, Levinas explained, “The truly difficult thing to understand is that one can hear and understand this commandment [that issues from the face]. Being persisting in being, that is nature. And that there can be a rupture with nature, yes; but one must not attribute to it the same force as nature has. There is a moment where the idea of freedom prevails – it is the moment of generosity. Here there is a moment where someone plays without winning. That is Charity. For me, this is very important. Something that one does gratuitously, that is grace. You [the interviewer] are reasoning as if the act were not gratuitous. The idea of the face is the idea of gratuitous love, the commandment of a gratuitous act” (IWAH 176).

every evaluation of the ‘forces in presence’ – is, no doubt, the summit of nobility” (BPW 51).

(ii) In the few paragraphs above, a number of references were made to *action*. To act, even when it is *for* the other, is fraught with difficulties. If the other and I were the only two people in the world there would be no problem. In this ‘society of two,’ I can be forgiven for the wrong I have done the other. Forgiveness assumes that there is a person who had borne the full weight of the wrong and as such exclusively and completely possesses over the right to pardon. The other can judge my intentions and deeds, since he is the only one affected by them. However, since I am always in the presence of the third, my wrong to the other might not appear to be so from the perspective of the third. My good deed towards the other might offend the third. Since, in the presence of the third, I cannot foresee all the consequences of my actions and I affect those I never intended to, “I act in a sense that escapes me” (EN 20). It is not possible to be forgiven, since I do not know who to ask for forgiveness, and the third cannot forgive in the name of the fourth. My very seeking for forgiveness from the third might be an offence to the fourth. For the most part, in a plurality, I am judged, not by my intentions, but by the consequences of my actions, which are determined according to an impersonal standard. In the presence of the third, “[t]he objective meaning of my action prevails over its intentional meaning;... I am at fault for something not reflected in my intentions” (EN 20). I have to consider the third in my actions: it is the start of a need for knowledge, impersonal morality, principles of justice and law. I am to be judged according to objective/inter-subjective standards.

Furthermore, in the presence of the third these objective standards are also necessary in another sense, for it is necessary to judge what has passed between the other and the third, who is also an other. We wonder, “What are they doing, these unique ones, what have they already done, to each other? For me, it would be to fail in my first-personal responsibility ... were I to ignore the wrongs of the one toward the other” (EN 195). This, for Levinas, is the “moment of justice” (EN 195). If there were only the other and I, he would always be first. In the presence of the third, however, I may also judge the third according to

impersonal standards and ask *him* for ‘an accounting’ insofar as he has wronged me, but more importantly, insofar as he has wronged the other.

Here lies the importance of, for example, the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, which tries to stipulate principles and arrange them into a hierarchy so as to guide our decisions on how we are to adjudicate the interaction between self, other and third at a global level. Yet the very fact that (the issues in) this debate exists (and persists) shows that there are no obvious principles and standards of judgement. Should we, for example, judge in terms of utilitarian, libertarian, communitarian, or liberal principles? Should we decide on a liberal approach to inform our judgement, then we are faced with the further problem that liberals themselves do not agree about which liberal principles should take precedence. In fairness, theorists in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate have highlighted most of the principal issues that pertain to the problem of global responsibility and justice, even though they have not come up with answers that are convincing to everyone, nor are they likely to ever do so. The knowledge developed in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate represents some of the best answers and guidelines we have as to how we should divide our responsibility in the presence of a global third, yet there is always a sense in which we are ‘acting in the dark.’

(iii) Writers in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate set their prescriptions, proposals, and criticisms within a framework of justice, a totality. Levinas also often speaks of justice, but always very abstractly. Justice, for Levinas, is what is required and begins in the presence of the third. Is it possible to derive some narrower, less abstract sense of what Levinas means by justice? What, more concretely, is a “better justice” (EN 196)?

The first thing to note is that justice is always imperfect and unfinished and it is therefore necessary to aspire to a ‘better justice.’ In a plurality, institutions are needed to convey and disperse my responsibility for distant others, to make social life possible, address social problems, offer protection from those who intend harm, and enforce legal justice. However, in their impersonality and objectivity institutions always fail, violate and overlook the other to varying degrees since institutions cannot deal with the other as an individual with unique

characteristics and needs, but can merely treat the other as a type (BPW 23; Burggraeve, 1981:49). It is because of their impersonality and objectivity that institutions fail to see the “tears of the other” (BPW 23).

Levinas further writes that justice is “always has to be made *more knowing* in the name, the memory, of the original kindness of man toward his other” (EN 229, emphasis added). What does Levinas mean by ‘made more knowing’? To make justice more knowing it is necessary to remind it of all the ways in which its rationality and objectivity violate, obstruct, fail, objectify, oppress and forget the other. It is in the name of our pre-original responsibility for the other that justice has to be confronted with its failings. (Below, I shall claim that this is one of the things the proposed ‘strategy’ aims to do.) Within the objective order of justice and the impersonality of its institutions there remains a role for the subject, for institutions cannot attend to the other’s most idiosyncratic needs. Where institutions fail or cannot reach, the self is in a much better position to not ‘pass by the closest.’

A more concrete sense as to what would constitute a ‘better justice’ still eludes us. It seems as though Levinas’s endorsement of human rights might provide a clue. Levinas supports the notion of human rights, which he sees as an acknowledgment of the, “in a sense, a priori” and universal fact of each person’s absolute dissimilarity (DF 117-119). He lists a number of human rights to be endorsed, including the “fundamental rights” (what Rawls would describe as ‘basic liberties’⁹), plus further rights such as the “right to social advancement” and the “right to the refinement of the human condition” (DF 120). However, Levinas remains coy about the more precise content of these rights. He also recognises the need “to ascertain the urgency, order and hierarchy of these various rights” (DF 120), a solution that is not attempted in Levinas’s own writing. Again, one has to return to the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate for fuller suggestions as to what the content and priority of human rights should be. However, the jostling over which rights should prevail and the conflict between selfish beings to have their rights recognised as

⁹ Some of the more important “basic liberties” include “political liberty (the right to vote and hold public office) and freedom of speech and assembly; liberty of conscience and freedom of thought; freedom of the person, which includes freedom from psychological oppression and physical assault and dismemberment (integrity of the person); the right to hold personal property and freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure as defined by the concept rule of law” (TJ 53).

fully as possible (a ‘political peace’) should always be informed by the original ethical generosity, an asymmetrical concern for the rights of the other before a concern for mine, “a surplus of my duties over my rights” as it were (EN 60, OB 159). The central argument of this study has indeed been that this ethical asymmetry has been lost sight of in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate.

Still, the vagueness of Levinas’s discussion of human rights has not brought us any closer to what we are to understand by a ‘better justice.’ That institutions violate and suppress the uniqueness of the other has been stated numerous times. Levinas’s view that, although “[t]here are no politics for accomplishing the moral, ... there are certainly some politics which are further from it or closer to it” (IWHA 177),¹⁰ can be rephrased as saying that different institutional arrangements can be more or less violent to the other. Put differently again, a better justice refers to an institutional arrangement in which the other is considered, protected and maintained in a greater complexity and sensitivity. For our purposes, this need not only refer to institutions, but can refer to society as a whole, for some *societies* are also more moral than others. Admittedly, this still leaves open the question as to which rights of the other should be considered, protected and maintained as most important. But to say that a society regards and treats the other in a greater complexity, suggests a more humane, tolerant, considerate and caring order, one in which human rights, and indeed human fullness, are more fully respected, protected, realised and promoted.

In light of the above preliminaries, every self has a responsibility to bring about a society that maintains and treats the other as complexly and as sensitively as possible. Since much injustice and cruelty is committed unwittingly and unintentionally, a political strategy that emphasizes and describes human complexity will help us to become aware of the (unnoticed) ways in which we have neglected and oppressed the other, and of all the ways in which he should be protected and cared for.¹¹ However, an element is missing, that of

¹⁰ Levinas goes on to say, “I believe that it is absolutely obvious that the liberal state is more moral than the fascist state, and closer to the morally ideal state” (IWHA 178).

¹¹ Rorty has written, “We have to stop talking about the need to form distorted to undistorted perceptions of moral reality, and instead talk about the need to modify our practices so as to take account of new descriptions of what has been going on” (TP 206). While I still see the *aspiration* to an undistorted perception of moral reality as a useful exercise, and, for pragmatic reasons, do not see matters in such oppositional terms as Rorty,

'activating' our concern for the other. For Levinas, it is imperative that the political be forever interrupted by the ethical; the question is *how*? Awakening us to our responsibility for the other is the second function of the proposed strategy, which sets out to describe and emphasize human complexity to the greatest extent possible.

Throughout this dissertation, writers in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate have been criticised for suppressing various aspects of the ethical relation with the other, which has resulted in us being left in good conscience, despite having failed the global other. At the start of this chapter it was argued that the cosmopolitan strategy to convince us of our guilt and responsibility for the global poor is counterproductive given that its emphasis on human equality numbs that which incites us to responsibility for the other, namely glimpses of him as different, unique. So, it seems as though our task is to confront the world with the 'face' of the other, to accuse the world of having left the other to quite literally 'die alone.' It is imperative that we "expose" the 'skins' of complacent selves to "wounds and outrage," that we elicit a "suffering for the suffering of the other" (CPP 146).¹² In order to bring the

he does express one of the functions of an emphasis on human complexity, which is to provide 'new descriptions of what is going on.'

¹² Of great, analogous relevance is a particular aspect (that of the relationship between spatial proximity and the willingness to inflict harm upon another person) of the psychologist, Stanley Milgram's (1974) classic study of obedience to authority. In Milgram's experiment, participants were led to believe that the effect of punishment on learning was being tested. Two people would arrive at the testing laboratory; one was designated to be the 'teacher' and the other the 'learner.' This designation of roles was rigged, as the 'learner' was indeed an actor and the 'teacher' was to be the object of study. During the experiment, the teacher was told by an accompanying 'researcher' (also an actor) to ask the learner questions on word pairs he had studied before and to administer incrementally stronger electric shocks (which were not real) to the learner (the actor) with every wrong answer. As the teacher 'increased' the voltage, the learner/actor's reaction progressed from a grunt, to wanting to be released, to an "agonised scream" (p. 5). The object of the experiment was to see how far ordinary people (the 'teachers') would go in administering electric shock to another person when told to do so. What Milgram discovered was that despite protesting and being uncomfortable with the suffering they were inflicting, a "substantial proportion" (p. 5) of these ordinary people administered the severest level of shock.

What is of particular concern in Milgram's experiment is the fact that obedience to authority (therefore cruelty to the learner) was "significantly reduced" as the learner was brought into greater physical proximity to the teacher. In the most distant situation the learner was placed in another room without the possibility of verbal communication with the teacher; the learner could only bang on the wall or make a light flash to indicate his answer. To create a situation in which there would be greater proximity between teacher and learner, verbal communication was enabled. At the next level of proximity, the learner was placed in the same room as the teacher, and in the most proximate situation the teacher had to force the learner's hand onto the shock place. (See also the discussion of Milgram's experiment in Bauman, 1989: 151-168.)

It should be recalled that there is no spatial sense to Levinas's notion of 'proximity.' Still, Milgram's experiment should be thought analogously to what the 'strategy of complexity' is trying to achieve, which is to make the other as face more pervasive in the life of the self. In this regard, it is interesting to note the Levinasian ring to some of the explanations Milgram himself offers as to why obedience/cruelty was reduced

world into proximity to the other, to expose third parties to his 'face,' it is claimed that actions aimed at conveying the other in as great a complexity as possible can help us do this.¹³ Complexity/difference is therefore not important for its own sake (and therefore to be maintained at all costs), but insofar as it insinuates the uniqueness of the other.

Of course, this 'strategy' immediately has to confront the objection that all representations of the other betray his alterity and suppress his otherness. Granting this, the claim made here is that there are representations (and positionings) of the other and articulations of his situation that are more suggestive of his otherness and my ethical responsibility for him. That this is so is suggested by the opposite, namely an extreme form of negating the other's uniqueness, his de-humanisation through racist and stereotyped representations whereby the way is paved for social and political disregard, maltreatment or 'disciplining.'¹⁴ Though one cannot be sure of the direction of causality, there seems to be a direct correlation between the fullness with which people are viewed and the extent of the concern we have for them. Is it not generally the case that the people we are most indifferent towards are also those most absent from our imaginations, those persons/groups we know least about? Returning to the group of people I am most concerned with in this study, the global poor, is it not the case that we generally know very little about them, compared to say, Americans? And, for example, is this not part of the reason that while the world reacted with great sympathy for the victims of the September 11th attacks in which more than three thousand

when the learner/victim was made more proximate to the teacher. Milgram surmised that making the learner more proximate was the result of making the suffering of the learner less abstract, of letting the learner "intrude on the subject's awareness," of bringing "the actions of the subject... under scrutiny by the victim," and of strengthening the link between the subject's actions and the learner's suffering (pp. 36-39). A strategic emphasis on human complexity seeks to render the suffering of the other more immediate, more intrusive into our good consciences, bringing the other into a position where the subject can see the link between his disregard and the suffering of the other and consider himself 'scrutinised' by the other.

¹³ A 'strategy' that emphasizes human complexity does not replace pointing out the numerous ways in which the global poor are treated unjustly from an impartial perspective, as 'impartial' considerations remain important for identifying injustice and proposing the shape of international institutions. A strategy of emphasizing human equality does not replace impartial cosmopolitan perspectives, but merely aims at what the cosmopolitan emphasis of human equality unintentionally counters, namely increased ethical concern for the other.

¹⁴ On the 'politics of recognition,' see Taylor (1994). On the wider 'redistribution vs. recognition' debate, see the exchange between Fraser and Honneth (2003). While both Fraser and Honneth are committed to the progressive and emancipatory goals of critical social theory, they disagree about the best theoretical approach to pursue such social justice. Fraser attempts to maintain both the issues of recognition and redistribution in a single framework of social justice, whereas Honneth's argument subordinates the issue of redistribution to *within* a framework of recognition.

people died, we do not pay much attention to the fact that every day approximately 30 000 children die from preventable illnesses, which translates into more than 10 million deaths per year (UNDP 2003:5; World Bank, 2004)! It is my contention that there is a relationship between the fullness with which we view people and the concern we have for them, and a large part of the reason is that a fuller conception of a person is a stronger suggestion of his uniqueness and the ethical command that issues from the fact of his uniqueness.

Levinas addresses the problem of the need for representational, ontological language to compare incomparable persons in the presence of the third through his distinction between the saying and the said. The saying is the nonlinguistic ethical proximity to the other, while the said is ontological language in the service of the said (see also section 4.2.3). The saying as proximity “lends” itself to the order of the said (OB 44), because the language, representation and thematisation of the said are necessary to speak to, with, about, and for the other in order to have justice. Although the said betrays the uniqueness of the other and the intimacy of the ethical relation through the use of universal language and by trying to contain the uncontainable in a concept, this betrayal is interrupted by the possibility of unsaying the violence and inadequacy of the said, by pointing to the ambiguity in language and to the impossibility of closing a system of thought, by retaining the right to be ‘sceptical.’ Levinas’s assertion that the betrayal of the other in the said should be reduced (BPW 107) is read as corresponding to the view of a more just order as one in which the other is depicted, held and treated in greater complexity and sensitivity.

A final issue that needs to be addressed concerns the vehicle(s) for exposing us to the greater complexity of the other. It is true that Levinas already assigns philosophy the dual task of articulating a more sensitive and sophisticated justice while at the same time disrupting justice by reminding us that justice has already failed the other, which is why Levinas describes philosophy as “the wisdom of love at the service of love” (OB 162). However, as political strategy, reliance on ‘philosophy’ is too elitist and would thus prevent the average person from politically acting for the other. The type of philosophy Levinas has in mind should certainly be included in a strategy of emphasizing complexity, but what I have in mind is not quite as highbrow. Taking our cue from Rorty, film, television

programmes, print and electronic journalism, political activism and works of fiction can all be employed to express and draw attention to previously unnoticed/unarticulated aspects of the human situation.¹⁵ There is no threshold of what constitutes a new or unique articulation, it depends very much on the audience, since, what for many people seem interesting or novel, might be old hat for the rest of us. The idea is rather to expand the fullness of the other in our imaginations, to bring us ever closer to an edge where we can peer into the depth of his unfathomable uniqueness, a uniqueness that is ethical. Very importantly, our strategy can bring those beyond our borders into a much greater proximity to us.

5.4. Conclusion

Having criticised the cosmopolitan strategy of emphasizing human equality and similarity as suppressing the uniqueness of the other, which is what incites us to responsibility for him, a 'strategy' of emphasizing human complexity, difference and uniqueness was proposed. Such a strategy was seen as having the benefit of making us aware of many of the ways in which we are naively unjust, which is of particular significance if we are to understand a relatively more just society as one in which the other is treated and maintained in the greatest complexity and with the greatest sensitivity possible. A strategy of describing and drawing attention to human difference and complexity was considered to hold a second advantage, especially in light of our earlier criticism of the cosmopolitans. The advantage lies therein that an emphasis on human uniqueness, although a betrayal of the other's alterity, is more suggestive of the other as face, and therefore more likely to awaken us to our ethical responsibility for the other. Through vehicles such as journalism, film, literature, television, political protest and also philosophy, there is the possibility of evoking greater and deeper recognition of the uniqueness of the other, especially the poor

¹⁵ Though Rorty is more explicit about these matters, Levinas also attributes an important role to the arts, the press and political activism as vehicles for progressive change. According to Levinas, the striving for a greater justice can be "heard in the cries that rise up from the interstices of politics and that, independently of official authority, defend the 'rights of man'; sometimes in the songs of the poets; [or] sometimes simply in the press or in the public forum of the liberal states" (EN 196).

other beyond our borders, exposing us to the 'wounds and outrage' he has been suffering amid our indifference.

CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSION

This study set out to better understand our general and persistent lack of individual concern and guilt for disregarding the poorest members of the global population, thousands of whom die daily from preventable, poverty-related causes. Such indifference to the global poor becomes paradoxical in light of the moral philosopher Emmanuel Levinas's central claim that the self is infinitely and inescapably responsible for the other person. Armed with this Levinasian premise, the principal debate about the extent of transnational responsibility, the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, was confronted to search for some understanding as to why those of us who are particularly able to assist the poor feel very little guilt for having done so little.

Guided by the research problem and a Levinasian approach, three significant features of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate were identified. (A) Theorists in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate were shown to preserve for the self as much autonomy as possible, an autonomy that was interpreted as indicating a limit to the self's responsibility for the other. A sphere of 'legitimate' disregard of the other (autonomy) is staked out, by, for example, fixing some point of equality between people, locating responsibility for the other with institutions, rendering an ethical or a political response to the other as equally legitimate, or by maintaining a split between the public and the private. By institutionally and theoretically limiting the responsibility the self is required to feel for the other, and through the general prioritising of the value of freedom above all others, the self is legitimated in being concerned with himself rather than with the other. (B) When approaching the issue of global justice, cosmopolitans and communitarians were shown to suppress what is other in their aspiration to establish general organising principles of global justice. While one has to admit that the generality of justice requires the suppression of otherness to some extent, cosmopolitans and communitarians never display any reticence in doing so. (C) Amongst cosmopolitans particularly, there is a large measure of concern for the extremely poor segment of the world's population. In trying to build a case for why the world's poor should be included in the considerations of global distributive justice, cosmopolitans stress the degree of global integration, based on the principle that those who

contribute to a scheme of social cooperation should be included in deciding how the spoils are to be divided. Failing to convince that the world is deeply enough integrated for the poorest of the poor to be considered participants in this 'scheme,' cosmopolitans resort to a view of justice as impartiality, so as to argue/assert that the poor should be considered as participants in the 'conversation' over global distributive justice.

Why are these three aspects of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate problematic in light of the research question? (A) If one accepts Levinas's premise that the ethical relation is always part of my relationship with the other, then the assumed and protected centrality of the subject in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate is not just empirically questionable, but also morally unfortunate, for it seeks to legitimise that which is ultimately illegitimate, my domination of and priority over the other. By establishing a limit to the subject's responsibility for the other, and by granting primacy to the value of freedom, the self is reassured and 'legitimised' in his usurpation of the world and the place of the other. Feeling himself justified in limiting his responsibility for the other, the self is unlikely to awaken to the other, to realise the injustice of his very being and his disregard of the other, and to take up his responsibility for the other. (B) Justice can never be finished. By suppressing what is other when thinking about justice, we are left in good conscience about the incompleteness of justice. It is the otherness of the other that reminds us that the function of justice is not merely to maintain order, but also partly to effect our *asymmetrical* responsibility for the other; justice always has to be improved and expanded in the name of our interpersonal responsibility for the other. (C) Greater concern for the global poor requires an ethical generosity from those in a position to help. Generosity, an act *for* the other that does not demand reciprocity, implies recognition of and a relationship with the other as face, as different. However, the cosmopolitan strategy to exact such gratuity is to emphasise human equality in order to demonstrate how we have fallen short of treating the poor global other as an equal. While well intentioned, this strategy has the unfortunate consequence of suppressing the other's difference, which is what awakens us to our asymmetrical responsibility for him. So, while the cosmopolitan strategy intends to elicit greater concern for the other, it in fact tends to numb us to the other as other, leaving us indifferent as to our personal failure to act for him.

Based on the interpretation of the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate advanced in this study, our indifference to the suffering of the extremely poor global other is hardly surprising based on (A) the privileged position of the self vis-à-vis the other; (B) the suppression of ethical otherness when thinking about justice; and (C) the self-defeating suppression of what reminds us of our responsibility for the other in cases where cosmopolitans aspire to elicit greater concern for the other. By having cast the issue of our transnational responsibility for the other, or rather, our failure to be and consider ourselves responsible for the global other, in the aforementioned terms, one is enabled to raise a number of questions and steer future research towards issues not (sufficiently) dealt with in this study or elsewhere.

First, the cosmopolitan and communitarian privileging and preservation of the autonomous self has been interpreted as an attempt to legitimise what cannot be legitimised, since, through the very act of being I have already dispelled the other from where I am and am therefore unjust. It would be useful to relate the preponderant view of the self (as autonomously free), as held by writers in the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate, to wider social and theoretical factors that reinforce this view of the self. At least two such social factors are salient. The *first* concerns the burgeoning global human rights culture. It is impossible to deny the positive difference the growing global recognition of human rights has brought about. However, one may wonder whether the individualistic tenets of human rights do not harbour a dark side. I am not referring to a communitarian criticism of human rights, whereby human rights are viewed as obstructing the achievement of national/communal goals. It is possible to ask if human rights do not provide the subject with an excuse to respond to the other politically, for the normative weight and legitimacy of human rights enable the self to 'legitimately' claim various rights against the other, such as the subject's right to private property (a dispelling of the other); his right to privacy (indifference to the other); right to self-determination (a dispelling of the other at a communal level); and so forth. A *second* trend that seems to legitimise the subject in being-for-itself, but that also forces the subject into such a self-regard, is the pervasive acceptance and implementation of a neoliberal economic agenda, an economic orientation that is

underpinned by highly individualistic tenets. Neoliberal economic policies set the self within a more competitive economic arena and in greater confrontation with others, encourage consumerism and materialism, values that do not augur well for 'giving the bread from one's mouth,' as Levinas would have it. A first step would require a close description of the (idealised) view of the self that underlies neoliberal economic individualism. A further step would entail an inquiry into how our economic individualism affects the self's relations with others, especially his ethical concern for the other.

Second, in the ethical relation with the other, the self "is under the weight of the universe, responsible for everything" (OB 116), even for the persecutions he undergoes (EI 99). When asked during an interview if such responsibility to everyone for everything is not "intolerable," Levinas answered, "I don't know if this situation is intolerable. It is not what you would call agreeable, surely; it is not pleasant, but it is the good" (EN 203). Elsewhere, Levinas puts it even more bluntly, "In a sense nothing is more burdensome than a neighbour. Is not this desired one the undesirable itself" (OB 88)? The extremity of the ethical accusation under which the subject finds himself lets it stand to reason that this is a situation that the self seeks to evade, or at least forestall, since recognition of the other as face leads the subject to be progressively displaced and hollowed out in responsibility for the other. Above, mention was made of the capacity of human rights/neoliberal individualism to reinforce and legitimise the subject against the ethical accusation that issues from the other. However, instead of resisting the other politically, a flight towards *anonymity* provides a less confrontational avenue for not responding to the other as face. In anonymity the self can evade the ethical command and the individual (indeed, individuating) response it requires, by dissolving the ethical accusation against him into the anonymity of the group. There are two major routes along which the self can veer towards anonymity when confronted by the individualising ethical accusation, when having to answer for one's 'right to be.' The one route lies in fading one's identity into a concept/group, whereas the other avenue lies in the living alongside one other of a legislated mass society, where beings are equals and thus interchangeable. Regarding the first route, cosmopolitans have criticised the "comfort of patriotism and its easy sentiments" (Nussbaum, 1999a:7), although this criticism is usually intended to encourage

people to adopt an impartial point of view. Patriotism and all 'we-feeling' should be questioned for the dissipation of the ethical accusation it facilitates. Regarding the second route towards anonymity: the impersonal, objective order of deeply regulated mass society, in which humans are objects of knowledge, justice and bureaucratic control, provides the subject with a hideout from the ethical accusation directed against him. In the monadic existence of persons in regulated society, we find unique persons reduced to concepts, albeit that these concepts are ever more refined. In the growing control and regulation of life in complex societies, people are 'known' as units in a system. In such an "idealism," and in the institutional imposition thereof, "all ethics [is reduced] to politics. The other and the I function as elements of an ideal calculus, receive from this calculus their real being, and approach one another under the domination of ideal necessities which traverse them from all sides. They play the role of moments in a system, and not that of origin" (TI 216). The increasing rationalisation and institutional regulation of our lives, mediates human interaction through a concept/principle/regulation/law and thereby increasingly undermines the im-mediacy of the face-to-face relation. Furthermore, societal rationalisation means that the needs of people are institutionally dealt with, or at least expected to be. In such societies, life occurs increasingly alongside one other, making indifference to the other ever more possible. Although sociality, the one-for-the-other, is the command "not to remain indifferent to [the other's] death, not to let the other die alone" (EN 169, see also EN 145-6, 186), the impersonality of mass society seems to be instituting indifference through its rationalisation and segmenting of social life, which reminds one of Levinas's warning that "there exists a tyranny of the universal and the impersonal, an order that is inhuman though distinct from the brutish" (TI 242). Bauman's (1989) *Modernity and the Holocaust* is an important work for the links it establishes between social rationalisation, overwhelming bureaucratisation and ethical indifference. Such work needs to be extended, fleshed out, applied to other case studies, and connected to societies less exceptional than the Third Reich.

Third, in the work of Levinas we find a deep endorsement of liberal democracy because of the ability of this political form to question its own justice in the aspiration to a better justice. However, although I am in agreement with Levinas, this idea is very

underdeveloped. One finds a similar view of liberal society in the work of Rorty, but also he does not go to great lengths to describe the features of liberal society that permit such a self-questioning justice. We are not sure if this capacity for ethical self-questioning is to be located in the electoral mechanism, the independent judiciary, the free press, wide-spread liberal arts education, the protection of individual liberty, the freedom of speech, the level of material well-being, etc. An answer would presumably include a combination of these features of liberal society. One could further consider the presence of these liberal democratic features at the global level, or at least, the potential for their coming about. But, perhaps more pressingly, and more germane to the research question of this study, questions need to be asked about how the ethical capacities of democracy are being eroded by nationalism, money politics, catchall politics, special interests, political apathy, and so forth, in the hope of identifying a path along which a more ethically concerned polity can be achieved.

A fourth and final area for investigation revolves around the ethical penetration of the political. In Levinas's work, and in this study, this idea is not given much content, though it is often stated. It is important for the ethical to interfere and disrupt the impersonal political order, for politics tend to lose sight of the ethical, and therefore risks sliding into 'tyranny.' Furthermore, the impersonal order of justice has forever to be more 'knowing' and more 'just' in the name of the 'pre-original' ethical for the other. Still, what one has to understand by an 'ethical reminder' has to be given more substance.

This study has taken Levinas's ethical thought at face-value and has treated it primarily as an analytical instrument in order to expose our indifference to the extremely poor global other, as reflected by the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. But, does Levinas's thought offer more than the mere enabling of analysis? The answer is yes. Although Levinas does not prescribe a specific course of action, reading his work, in which the ethical imperative is inextricably meshed with descriptions of the ethical relation, leaves one forever unable to rest in good conscience amid the suffering of others. After Levinas, it is impossible to say that the suffering of the poor is not my concern. It is in this unsettling of our complacency that a promise for a more just order resides.

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